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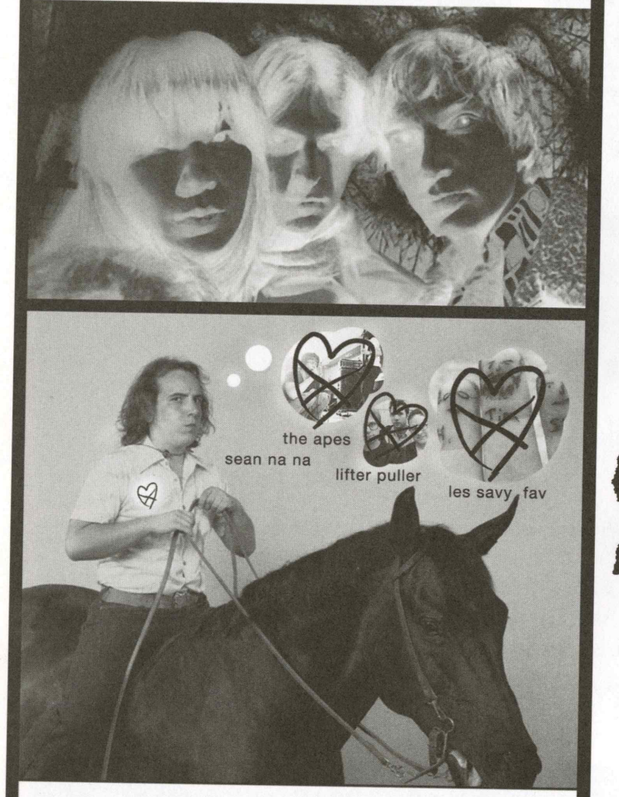

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[EDITORIAL: CHRIS GRIMLEY,

The House, Public

loud paper started this issue with the impression that the debate about certain types of housing - specifically rental and subsidized - had become declassé, somehow not important enough to warrant coverage in the mainstream journals that keep us informed about this profession. This debate was somehow missing from a contemporary architectural discourse that favors the glam of computer-generated form and the spectacle of the image over the budget and restraint of reality. I hope that there might perhaps be a renew interest in examining the repercussions on our profession of the rapidly deteriorating programs of the Department of Housing and Urban Development and other like agencies who deliver housing and shelter for those in our society who may not be able - or who may not believe - that the attainment of property is one of the first steps in the ladder of acceptance as a legitimate member of American society. Architecture's currency, however, has turned from a vested interest in the advancement of society to a vested interest to the advancement of form, with a side pursuit of being displayed in museums, or building the museums in which to be displayed.

The last century of our collective work towards solving the issues and problems inherent in the idea of the minimum dwelling fly in the face of a clientele that is increasingly wanting larger and larger square footages in which to house their collections of Restoration Hardware heirlooms. While the large-scale "projects" of the 1960's are increasingly disappearing, the twin issues of density and urbanity have been replaced by the more tasteful - read populist - and mannered new urbanisms. Picket fences, pitched roof profiles and pastel colors cannot solve urban housing. Indeed, this suburbanization of urban cores does more harm than good, with the total numbers of occupants dropping in the revitalization schemes.

There is still a lot of value in trying to relocate importance to housing and architecture. Europe seems ahead of North America in this respect, and there is much to learn from the emergent hybrids of uniting modern form with political, social and economic intent.

PHOTO BY ERIC HOWELER]

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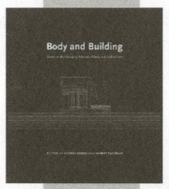

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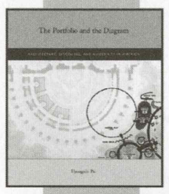

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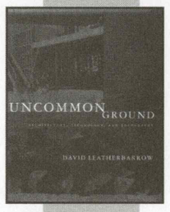

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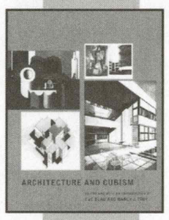

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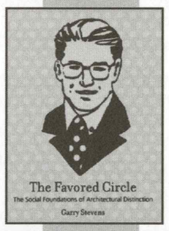

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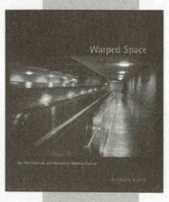

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Corbusier observed that a dream times
million equals chaos. In Los Angeles
the millions of dreams of its citizens
t make up the face of the city.
se, p.103

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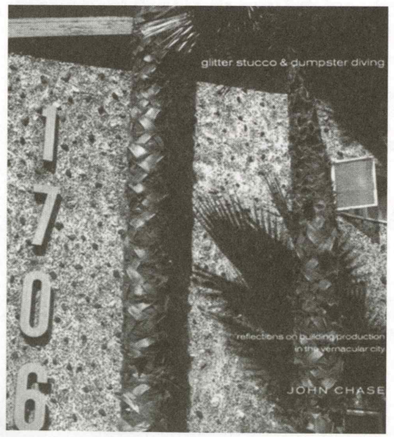
GLITTER STUCCO+ DUMPSTER DIVING, JOHN CHASE VERSO, 2000

SUPERMODERNISM: ARCHITECTURE IN THE AGE OF GLOBALIZATION, HANS IBELINGS NAI, 1998.

REVIEWED BY JOE DAY

Collecting essays written over fifteen years, John Chase's *Glitter Stucco & Dumpster Diving* explores the obvious as well as the overlooked underbelly of western US cities. His findings reveal a fiercely democratic, if *ad hoc*, urbanism in which developers, homeowners, renters, retailers, pedestrians and the homeless all demarcate, and thereby create, civic place. Although writing is an avocation for Chase—by day, he is an architect and urban planner currently overseeing West Hollywood's civic renewal—he spouts infectious prose and incendiary theories as easily as Dave Hickey or Mike Davis do to explain LA's ever-proliferating landscape. These essays include few "big-name" architects, instead Chase applies penetrating art historical research to the un-sung. Convinced that buildings rarely outshine but often outlast their authors, Chase researches the origins of "ding-bat" stucco boxes as if they were archeological remnants. He illuminates the personalities and circumstances that gave rise to each, be they of Tiki, Colonial, Mod or mixed pedigree. Chase proposes an alternative canon against LA's long line of high-modernists. Included is the godfather of the modern Mansart roof, John Woolf, a prolific and groundbreaking "exterior decorator" revamping Hollywood homes in the sixties. In "The Making of Mountaingate" Chase assesses the dingbats of our time. Built in the early seventies, Mountaingate is a planned community perched on a ridge of the Sepulveda Pass, the only development for miles in that stretch of the Santa Monica Mountains until the recent completion of the Getty and Skirball museums. It is the Ur-gated enclave, where many of the hallmarks of later privatized communities were either invented—he notes pioneering use of grossly over-stated security systems, abstracted Mediterranean
cornice lines—or go eerily missing, as in the case of pedestrian amenities like sidewalks and communal swimming areas. In the most critically innovative section of *Glitter Stucco*, Chase channels his first-hand experiences of the city, shaped equally by his own circumstances and the desires of clients, neighbors, friends and lovers. "The Curmudgeon's Guide to Urban Living" offers a detailed account of the goings on in the alley behind Chase's Venice home, complete with an ecology of local trash sorting, a street-fair's worth of activity and gossip and a bum's rush of an ending.

As Chase comments, "Sometimes life is only redeemable through representation." Chase thesis crystallizes in his final chapter, "You Are What You Buy," arguing for a radical reassessment of consumerist architecture. He identifies five orders of building production, dividing design into three for-profit and two not-for-profit categories that include Vanguard, Corporate/Institutional, and Consumerist in the market-driven column, against Utilitarian and Personal Fantasy designs not intended for consumer use. Like Robert Venturi and Charles Moore before him, Chase cites high design's indifference and, by extension, irrelevance in the construction of ninety-five percent of the built environment. More specifically, he chastises architects for not acknowledging their role, with both its possibilities and limitations, in the production of a late-capitalist landscape. He reads the art world ambitions of most contemporary architects, and their corresponding blindness to the tawdry environmental realities of most commissions, as either side of a self-deluding coin, one that acts as currency only within the fixed parameters of the academy. By contrast, Hans Ibelings argues that high-design currency is actually gaining purchase in the "real world." Succinct in both polemic and format, lavishly illustrated and brutally reductivist, Ibelings' *Supermodernism: Architecture in the Age of Globalization* is a primer for all that John Chase laments in contemporary architecture. Icy images of monuments, strictly by architects of global stature, float in a sea of seductively neat observations celebrating the promise of a homogeneous worldview.



Published in 1998, many of the predictions in *Supermodernism* now ring prophetic. Ibelings' dry dismissal of both Postmodernism and Deconstruction has the elegance of a geometric proof: allowing that we are all postmodern in our doubts and relativism, he points out that we need not be, and may not want to be, in our art. And his defense of placeless, context-free mega-urban gestures in subsequent chapters titled simply "Modernism" and "Supermodernism" leaves the reader feeling like the world could indeed be a cleaner, simpler space. (Perhaps even a non-place, to employ a term Ibelings borrows from sociologist Marc Auge to explain an emergent supermodern paradigm reflective of ever more global practices and exchange.)

Globalization is a tough term to pin-down. Ibelings is at some pains to both acknowledge its slipperiness and argue its increasingly pervasive authority. Though reliant on many of the guiding principles of the New Economy— instant communication, pre-9/11 open travel, free trade, etc.—Ibelings wisely conditions his enthusiasm with disclaimers. Noting that sociologists disagree vehemently about not only the nature but even the existence of globalization, Ibelings concedes that phenomena like "glocalization"—the global projection of specific subcultural values, as in the spread of hip-hop habits or surf/skate labels—run counter to new pancultural standards of design. But he concludes, "although it is possible, for example, to point to the multi-cultural, multi-form nature of urban regions around the world as a sign of growing heterogeneity, the strongest arguments seem to favor the homogenization viewpoint."

He sees recent architectural developments, both in their aesthetics and their circumstances, as symptoms, but not leading indicators, of a broader cultural shift toward more global, neutral and non-representational forms of art and exchange.

To illustrate this attitude and its spread, Ibelings links the catalog for MoMA's 1995 show *Light Constructions* with simultaneous books in four languages devoted individually to the Monolithic, Minimal, Smooth and Transparent in new architecture. All are united in their aspiration to affect, to be "devoid of allusion," and their refusal of postmodern or deconstructive ambitions to make buildings "texts." Ibelings sees a shared wisdom in the work of a few European and Asian firms that recur in many of these publications, including Peter Zumthor, Herzog de Meuron, OMA/Rem Koolhaas, Toyo Ito and Tadao Ando. All, in Ibelings' estimation, exhibit a well-justified disillusionment with the allegorical architecture of the seventies and eighties.

Ibelings returns repeatedly to the Postmodernist elevation of context, calling "sensitivity to context" as an all-purpose rationalization of mediocre infill building. Their historicism then converted into fodder for themed amusement parks, planned communities and shopping centers utterly cut off from their surroundings. But unlike Chase, who would opt for a renewed search for and creation of an authentic milieu, Ibelings accepts the spatial foreclosure of these new developments. He simply wishes they were better, and by better, he means less preoccupied with representation and symbolism.

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Nowhere is this disagreement between Chase and Ibelings more clear than when both return to Venturi's testing grounds, examining recent projects in Las Vegas. Surprisingly, Chase and Ibelings share a bete noir in Jon Jerde (and more surprisingly, an enthusiasm for Charles Jencks). Chase and Ibelings both see a threatening future in Jerde's Fremont Street Experience, in which the older casinos along Vegas' historical strip are united and encapsulated by a new arcade of translucent roofing and lighting. For Chase, Fremont Street represents a complete repudiation of the public domain. Reconstructing the civic politics of a contested city/county tax base that led to the Fremont redevelopment, Chase portrays Jerde's scheme as a "malling" and live burial of old Vegas' civic core.

For Ibelings, Jerde's work both hides and hides from its inner hypocrisy, the stale repackaging of unnecessary signifiers. But it's clear from the visuals which author sees the greater crime in Jerde: Ibelings give Fremont Street full-color, full-bleed documentation, a center-fold spread of hue and light that in many ways meets the criteria of supermodernity; Chase includes a nostalgic pre-roof black and white. This split recurs. Chase and Ibelings are extreme manifestations of two often confused but in fact complimentary urban sensibilities: the Metropolitan and Cosmopolitan.

Chase
METROPOLITAN
city as project

Ibelings
COSMOPOLITAN
city as destination

Metropolitan Chase argues that design culture must recognize and reward the actual participants in city-making; Ibelings contends that the primary role of designers is to project and define new modes of urbanity. The cosmopolitan seeks spectacles of experience that lure a migratory elite (and the labor to serve them) from one world-city to the next. This continuum polarizes Chase and Ibelings in cultural terms, but one can imagine both humble and ambitious architecture, perhaps at odds aesthetically, but in the service of paired, civic ideals. Chase and Ibelings are united in their enthusiasm for urban expansion—which is not the case with suburbanist Jerde (or, as Ibelings notes, a new urbanist like Leon Krier). To explore the more entrenched societal divide that separates Chase and Ibelings from more city-phobic or *contrapolitan* suburbanists and new urbanists, another axis is needed:

New Urbanists (Krier) — METROPOLITAN (Chase) city as project — Everyday Urbanists

CONTRAPOLITAN — city as disease

MEGALOPOLITAN — city as proliferation

Suburbanists (Jerde) — COSMOPOLITAN city as destination — Supermodernists (Ibelings)

Koolhaas' famous celebration of density in *Delirious New York* is the foundation of the megalopolitan position. By contrast, contrapolitans celebrate the value(s), virtues, legitimacy and innovation occurring at the periphery of cities in suburban, exurban, and rural zones. Congestion is the watchword by which megalopolitans and contrapolitans distinguish one another. When contrapolitans consider inner or central cities, they see their unworkable gridlock and propose pedestrian overlays of family-friendly amenities to entice disaffected suburbanites preoccupied with security and parking. The above table isolates interests that cut across metro/cosmo divides: the metropolitan interest in semiotics and legibility pertains to both the new and everyday urbanists, while suburbanists and supermodernists both seek a unifying, cosmopolitan aura that might transcend, or at least overwhelm, local signifiers. Chase and Ibelings live in the same megalopolitan city. They may not frequent the same boutiques or bars, but they hate the same malls and avoid the same suburbs. It's interesting that though both *Glitter Stucco and Supermodernism* are paeans to cities, Rotterdam and Los Angeles that are both slightly dubious locales, in age, density and depth when compared with the classic poles of London, Paris, Berlin, New York, Tokyo. Both are cities defined largely over the last fifty years: more the beneficiaries than victims of the proto-globalization played out in two world wars. For the last decade the Dutch, led by Koolhaas in Rotterdam, have been exporting a SUPER, guilt-free reassessment of modernist potential that has assumed its own commodity value. Meanwhile Los Angeles has produced an endless art-world procession of neo-noir, mid-century nostalgia.

Both strains of criticism have an obvious allure for denizens of post-World War II cities, but they dodge more complicated questions of waning civic identification that have many affluent westerners abandoning urban centers, running for gated hamlets in the hills.

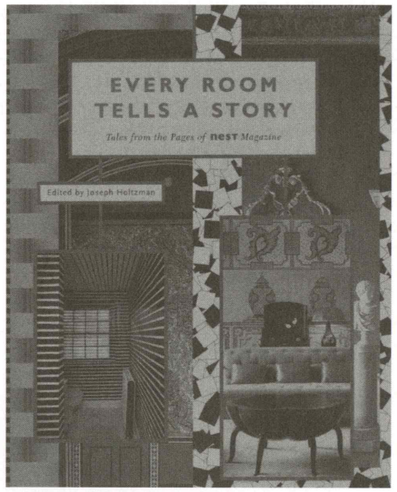
EVERY ROOM TELLS A STORY: TALES FROM THE PAGES OF NEST MAGAZINE
JOSEPH HOLZMAN, EDITOR
DISTRIBUTED ART PUBLISHERS, 2001

DESIGN IS...
AKIKO BUSCH, EDITOR
PRINCETON ARCHITECTURAL PRESS/METROPOLIS BOOKS, 2001.

REVIEWED BY
ALAN G. BRAKE

In 2001, even before September 11, the shrinking economy was taking its toll on the design press in America. First to go was ultra glossy *One*, which had extensive Web and print media presence. With its slick photography, light content, and unfortunate subtitle, "Design Matters," One attempted to be the *Cosmopolitan* of the design press, seeming only to prove that design didn't matter. On the other side of the spectrum, the long-running scholarly journals *Design Book Review* and *Assemblage* ceased publication. In the professional press, Interiors-the magazine that launched the career of critic Arthur Drexler, had George Nelson on its masthead and spun off *ID*-folded without warning after 113 years of continuous publication.

Two magazines that, not coincidentally, appeared to flourish during this difficult year, *Nest* and *Metropolis* both published their first books, compilations that amount to the greatest hits of both magazines. *Every Room Tells A Story: Tales from the Pages of Nest Magazine* offers a sampling of the many strange birds that Nest has sheltered. Domesticity is the subject, but the magazine's perspective is anything but quotidian. From fashion designers to the rural poor, world famous artists to cross dressers from the 60s, *Nest* peers into their domiciles, looking for insight into the particular lives of their owners and reflections on humanity in general. Simply flipping through the magazine (or the book), *Nest* appears decadent and occasionally exploitative of its subjects, but after deeper reading it becomes clear that the opposite is true. *Nest* is refreshing because, at its core, it is anti-hierarchical. Decoration, the book argues, is deeply personal, and accessible-something that we all practice. Joseph Holzman, *Nest's* founder, editor-in-chief and art director, is described in the introduction as a self-taught decorator, underscoring a distinction that is made throughout the book: the defense of decoration, not design. The magazine resists the universal, mass production tendency central to modern design, and is obsessed with the unique. Design, as we know it through more mainstream publications, is made light of, almost ridiculed. They Photoshop suburban Tudor style facades on Philip Johnson's sleek Robert Leonhardt House. The summer 1999 cover story, poking fun at *Architectural Digest*, shows the magazine thumbing its nose in equal part at the white-gloved elitism of society decorating. *Nest* studies the celebrity designer with a literary eye. Articles such as "Andree Putman by Herself" or "Julian Schnabel, Decorator" prove that the quirkiest characters, not well-appointed flats, make the best story. In the end it is the people in *Every Room* that are memorable, often the least famous people, and the rooms serve as lenses through which we learn about them and ourselves. In "An Unruly Passion For Things," Harvard theologian



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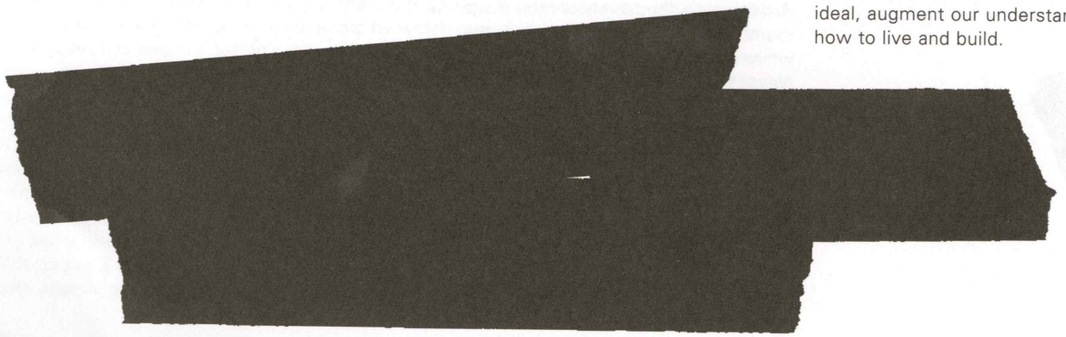
and minister Peter Gomez confesses his lifelong obsession with coveting and collecting, a result of growing up a child of working class black parents and seeing the fine homes of the white families for whom his mother cleaned. "Casa Suzanna," a reprinted series of photographs of 1960s female impersonators on vacation, shows everyday cross dressers playing cards, eating dinner, idling by a lake, in addition to doing a bit of posing. This intersection, of people on the fringes of society engaged in the most conventional rituals of daily living, prompts us, in the least didactic way possible, to reconsider society's and our own personal boundaries. This is what *Nest* is best at, giving us a fresh view of something we may have lived with our entire lives or showing us a way of living that we never would have imagined.

Metropolis magazine celebrated its twentieth anniversary with the publication of *Design Is...*, a book which takes design very seriously. Divided into five themed sections-words, things, people, buildings, and places-the book opens poorly with a wandering letter by contributing editor Barbara Flanagan to her son, in which she speculates about the state the world in 2020. Although this gesture reveals one of the magazine's weaknesses-over indulging authors who make up their own – in crowd – *Design Is...* contains some wonderful, inspiring writing. Karrie Jacobs' essay about the spontaneity and richness of street posters is one of these gems: "Around the corner from the fence... someone has repeatedly wheat-pasted a simple poignant message in crude black type on white paper: 'My beloved was queer-bashed here.'" As is Penelope Rowlands' reminiscence about a meeting with Charlotte Perriand is another: "She believes firmly that less is more, decrying "consumer society" and constant coming back to the importance of simplicity, even for kids. 'I've seen children playing with dolls made of rags more happily than they would with all those Barbies,' [Perriand] says. 'The more they have, the less they'll be happy. That's why I'm for limiting things. So that we can breathe freedom.'

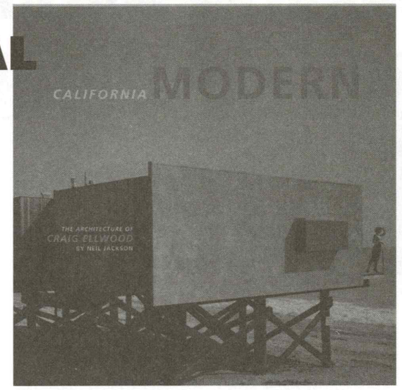
This personal insight, unlike that in *Nest*, gives us more to reflect on about design than it necessarily does about Perriand. Metropolis is more interested in grand narratives than Nest. For example, James Howard Kunstler's "Interview with Jane Jacobs" reminds us of the brilliance of Jacbos' seminal *Death and Life of Great American Cities*, and shows how woefully inadequate current urban models, such as New Urbanism, are at even approximating the vitality of city life. "When we are faced with the task of fixing up a riverbank-and many American cities are on rivers-we have to put in theme parks, ballparks, aquariums, all this stuff. In Europe they make granite embankments with a ramp or stairs down to the water, and it's beautiful," Jacobs notes, with her characteristic clarity of vision.
The roster of names in *Design Is...* is extremely impressive, perhaps to a fault. Practically every page is littered with names and quotes, with some thought or remark by every prominent designer of the last twenty-five years. While most of these quips are insightful, and some are truly worth preserving, the book could use less name-dropping and visual clutter (to take a lesson from Perriand). There are big ideas and nuanced examinations that seem a bit overwhelmed by the chatter.

Rem Koolhaas is quoted in *Every Room Tells A Story*, saying, "You want many more *Nests*, but not *Nest* forever. It is a corrective, a temporary breach, an opening... If *Nest* is a manifesto, it is hoped that it will end, suddenly, like the Surrealists' reviews. Then it can assume its future as legend." At a time when so many publications are failing these two privately held magazines have been able to survive. Their contrasting lessons, to value the individual and the universal ideal, augment our understanding of how to live and build.



CALIFORNIA MODERN: THE ARCHITECTURE OF CRAIG ELLWOOD
NEIL JACKSON
PRINCETON ARCHITECTURAL PRESS, 2002.

REVIEWED BY
STEVEN CASEY



Last summer, New York saw a critical reassessment of Mies van der Rohe's body of work in America and Berlin in a pair of exhibitions. While Craig Ellwood may not seem a likely candidate for such curatorial fanfare, a book on this early California Modernist is nonetheless warranted. With snippets of hearsay and measured retribution, *California Modern: The Architecture of Craig Ellwood* leans heavily on the side of biography. A thorough review of Ellwood's work is present, yet like many monographs, Neil Jackson falls somewhat short of giving a fully qualified assessment. In large part, Ellwood's focused his career on domestic architecture concluding with larger commercial projects and an institutional building of note-the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena. Following a path set out in *California Modern*, his career travels from a modest start to the proverbial bitter end. Perhaps the highlight of Ellwood's practice in both architecture and brandmaking is his authorship of the modern house.

At present, the single-family house is an erratic architectural pursuit. It is a product of patronage for the few. Developer cost-driven productions and popular taste in housing turn the masses elsewhere for shelter. Yet the architectural housing exercise still holds value. An opportunity for experimentation, domestic design has helped many renowned architects develop reputations. Ellwood modeled his practice on a distinct set of ideas, and actively marketed his ability to produce the commercially desired modern home.

Often thrown around and accepted with semi-conscious nods of understanding, modern is a complex adjective. Here it is directly linked to the set of building practices in California following the end of the World War II. Ellwood's work follows the earlier beginnings of Rudolph Schindler and Richard Neutra and is directly related to John Entenza's Art and Architecture magazine and the Case Study House Program. Not trained as an architect, Ellwood entered into modern design as a cost estimator for the Eames and the Entenza houses. Contact with these pursuits introduced him to a housing aesthetic that was based on a simplified organization of space constructed with affordable materials and methods. Many of the houses are simply post and beam (metal or wood) with glass, brick and stone, plaster or wood infill. This early exposure would mark much of his built work, specific systems of building and the constraints of budget.

Tracing who did what on Ellwood's Pierson and Hunt houses, one can outline the organizational hierarchy in the office. Jerry Lomax, an early employee, did a majority of the work on the two houses. The Piersons came to Ellwood though the Eames and Entenza relationship. Recent California émigrés, the Piersons wanted a modern, "Richard Neutra-style" house. The Hunt house followed shortly after. The clients had seen the Pierson house and wanted something similar. As a result, the two houses share a comparable parti. The houses meet the street with twinned garage façades separated by a main axis that leads to the house. The public solidity at street level gives way to private transparencies as the house steps down to the beach. Compared to the boxy and often spatially confused Pierson house, the Hunt house achieves a cleaner plan. The 'H' configuration living spaces are given full exposure on the beach while the bedrooms retreat to the back and are protected by outdoor spaces.

In size and plan these houses are very modest: approximately 1200 square feet. They were sought out by clients who desired something more that the tract home (which was what they could afford). What is most significant about the two houses is that the clients wanted a modern California home. They bought into Ellwood's dream. The houses were products of a branded popularity.

Since he secured the work and communicated with the clients, both houses are considered original Ellwood designs. While Lomax was on to designing the office's next creation, Ellwood, true to his hustler tendencies, busied himself with furnishings and photographic records of the projects. It is important to note that his office was a very well-devised vehicle for this delegated system. Throughout his years of practice he consistently hired people who were traditionally trained architects, thus bringing with them both technical skills and modern idiom.

The firm's projects account for only a small part of an enviable construction boom in California. A period in which those with modest means sought out housing. *California Modern* makes the case that Ellwood had the ability to deploy the structure and materials around a modern plan in a cost-effective way. It would not be accurate to claim that Ellwood was a pioneer. Indeed, a large part of Ellwood's housing projects were simply derivation of the tract house. Instead he understood the desire for the new and was able make the modern home accessible to a significant number of clients.

California Modern puts forward a body of work that corroborates an aesthetic that we have come to value again. Although the biographical tone of *California Modern* comes off as a bit nostalgic, Ellwood is a worthy addition the cannon. A more relevant reading of his body of work considers his influence on home production. A study of Ellwood's practice opens up the range of possibilities available to the design of the single-family house.

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STALKING DETROIT

GEORGIA DASKALAKIS, CHARLES WALDHEIM + JASON YOUNG, EDITORS. ACTAR, BARCELONA, 2001.

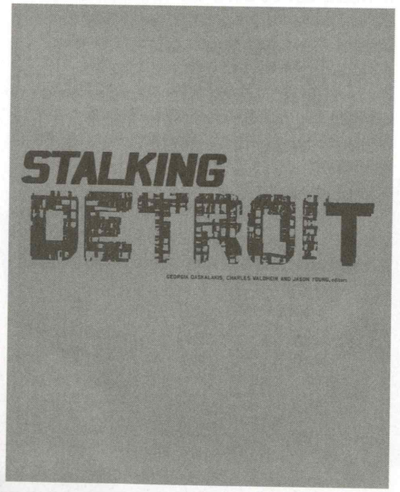
REVIEWED BY MARTHA SCREATON-BURTON

In graduate school I was given an assignment called "Stalker." Under the dome of Los Angeles sky, I was to sit in my car outside the MGM Studios south plaza building, wait for someone to exit the building and get into their car – "pick someone, anyone," read the brief. Ostensibly it was a way to get oriented in a new city, but really, it was a kind of mapping – perhaps the most honest kind: see where the subject leads you.

This was the goal of the committee who produced *Stalking Detroit*. Rather than solutions to the problem of Detroit, they begin with the premise that Detroit doesn't need to be solved. Detroit faces some serious difficulties; and though the book presents distressing statistics that keenly illustrate the city's loss of citizenry, the suburban sprawl that decimated the downtown and the heart-rending disparity of wealth, land and resources along racial lines, the editors assert that Detroit, the ultimate product of modernity, devoted to the monoculture of the automobile industry and an obsessed with technology, is evolving into exactly what it was designed to be. *Stalking Detroit* is not naïve to the problems, it simply observes. "Lavish [Detroit] with unwanted attention," the editors suggest in their introduction, and then present alternative futures.

A highly erudite and articulate production (designed and printed by Actar in Barcelona) the book is a compilation of essays, photographic images and architectural projects. The three projects, "Projecting Detroit," "Decamping Detroit," and "Line Frustration," are sited in the city's downtown. They are accompanied by critical responses from architects and academics.

The design projects are interspersed with divergent artworks and essays. "Detroit's Michigan," written by Kent Kleinman and LeslieVan Duzer, highlights the fate of the Michigan Theater - a representative of the city itself. Constructed in 1926 and abandoned in 1975, the theater is now in a constant, albeit static, state of demolition. The artwork is crude intervention of a three-story parking lot within the structure of the theatre, it is composed of "sheared beams, amputated balconies, severed electrical lines [and a] ragged plaster canopy." Anti-architectural, it is typical of the city's infrastructure on the whole, not fully constructed nor demolished.



Another piece in the deconstruction vein is, *Erasing Detroit*. The artwork utilizes the fact that "... between 1978 and 1998 only 9000 building permits were issued for new homes in Detroit, while over 108,000 demolition permits were issued." towards a rather poignant student project of the systematic demolition of one simple house among thousands, taken apart piece by piece, and displayed in a local gallery – a kind of anti-monument.

In an essay entitled "After Ford," Patrik Schumacher and Christian Rogner, both at the Architectural Association's Design Research Lab, note the connection between corporate organization and spatial articulation in the construction of buildings and urban space, evidenced in the history of Detroit. "After Ford" expands on the socio-economic history of the automobile industry – Fordist and post-Fordist organizational models of urbanization – with Detroit as its trope. Ford's architect Albert Kahn devised a system of reinforced concrete, creating wide spaces, vertical organization and offering freedom of movement. The increased flexibility for production lines resulted in the Model T. Later, when production exigencies determined that the era of one-factory-under-one-roof had passed, production spread out into the city and extruded horizontally, reminiscent of
Le Corbusier's "City as machine." Surprisingly, even as production left the city, Kahn and Ford's River Rouge complex was listed as a national historic landmark in 1978 and still churns out a car every few seconds.

Today, Schumacher and Rogner continue, there is an attempt to recolonize the abandoned downtown core with casinos, sports stadia and other urban *cures*. One tactic has been to treat the city as an American "ruin," encouraging tourism and reconfiguring the city as a brand name recreation center. Others attempt social missionary work and propose drastic measures to fix the city. Still others hype Detroit in order to increase speculative property values. None attempt to address Detroit's spatial problems, however, which are the direct result of abandonment, disinvestment, decay and the bleak lack of diversity of an economic monoculture.

The projects in *Stalking Detroit* attempt to point the way revitialization. The first of these, "Projecting Detroit," is a project by architects Georgia Daskalakis and Omar Perez of DAS:20 Architecture Studio, which focuses on the presence of absence. The project takes inspiration in the vacated, decayed regions of Detroit, as these offer both potential and freedom. Reminiscent of Derridean undecidablity, that Truth is not found in structural oppositions but in the space between, they note that people are drawn to the gaps between present and absent, construction and erasure. "Detroit offers us the experience of a new and unprecedented reality," they note, not attempting to comprehend and categorize the contracting city but to experience its immediacy, lest it be formulated into something else, something with which we are always already familiar.

Their project picks out uncanny spaces and offers possibilities for inhabitation that avoid "aggressive transformation." Formally, the project cuts a section of ground, adding various horizontal planes that shift the ground plane, decreasing synoptic perception so that landscape, city and horizon shift in and out of view. Programmatically indefinite, the project is Bernard Tschumi's Parc de la Villette, but with a drive-in theater, an amphitheater, athletic grounds with observation platforms, a pool, bathhouse and infirmary. While the ambition of DAS:20's project is clear, they nevertheless impose memory on a city designed to be without it, contravening the founding principles of Detroit and suggesting a trajectory for the future.

In the second project "Decamping Detroit," Charles Waldheim and Marilí Santos-Munné affirm that "from a planning standpoint Detroit is a resounding success. [...US cities are] temporary ad hoc arrangements based on the momentary optimization of industrial production."

The military infrastructure that lent itself so keenly to the forces of economics and production, when complete, could be decommissioned and, as such, Detroit simply decamped, hence their project's title. The project suggests a disposable nomadism. Some of their proposals return to the land with migrant worker homesteads and garden annex and experimental agriculture cooperative homestead, but others (arson investigation center, rifle range, and ex-urban survival training boot camp) are frightening proposals. The project enters the realm of the post-apocalyptic, rather than post-industrial. Their proposals are more about survival fear factor than building meaningful community.

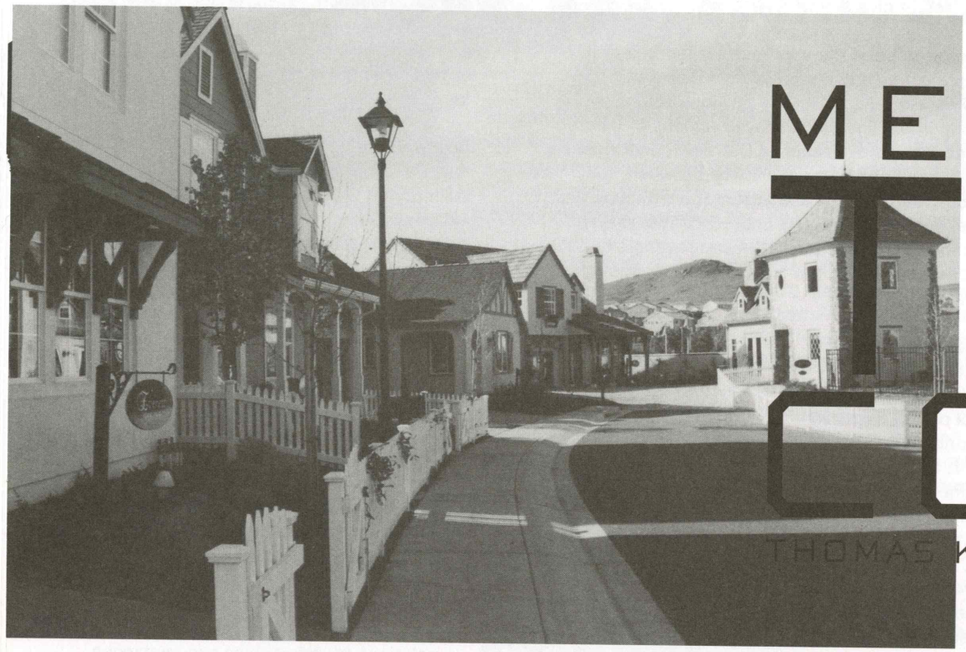
As with our grad school stalking project, in which some subjects were oblivious, others terrorized, sometimes you must leave well enough alone. Clearly Detroit is not doing *well enough*, but architectural solutions are perhaps not adequately substantial to effect the kind of change required. Dan Hoffman notes in his contribution to the book, "architecture is corollary to the erasure of nature by the art of construction," but the inverse is also true. While it might be difficult for architects and planners whose existence is predicated on doing something, anything, perhaps we must accept that Motor City and the twenty-first century were not meant to co-exist and thus we must let it lie fallow.

The central issue, which the entire book fails to tackle, is the evolution of this particular city, and why it hasn't followed the example set by other cities. In fact, this is acknowledged by the book's premise, stated at the outset, that Detroit is evolving into exactly what it was supposed to be. It was not designed to be a city in the classical sense. Cities develop out of conflicting desires and their resolution. Detroit did not; it was immaculately born from the desire of a single industry. As a result it resists accretion and intervention, proposals of this type that that now go against its grain.

Also remarkably absent from the text is that there are a great number of people still living in Detroit, and the majority are extremely poor, to say nothing about the disparity of wealth according to race.
The issue for government has become the provision of services. Property taxes are no doubt lower here than anywhere else in the nation and expenses outweigh revenues in the context of a single house per city block, but these problems are place-less; they are the problems of the very poor, anywhere they might live.

The proposals in *Stalking Detroit* have all the poetics and poignancy that only serious detachment allows. As artworks, they stand as meaningful statements. But as architecture, they ultimately fail, because they are solutions for *tabula rasa* circumstances.
Where you have nothing to begin with, you can build anything. But will they come? Migratory flows of people based on gainful employment are not going to alter because you've created a park, or a sectionally interesting landscape. It satisfies the architect's classic hero complex by thinking that architecture can solve problems such as these, of this magnitude. The projects proposed begin to look self-indulgent in the face of the scale of the problems.

The sole project in the book to persevere and actually work, is the Michigan Theatre parking lot. It is presented as architectural tragedy, with all the attendant horror of its being flayed alive and bones displayed for public consumption. An Other – both a hybrid and an outsider, it is beautiful in its absurdity and attractive in its unanticipated occupation.



MERCHANDIZING TAKES: COMMAND

THOMAS KINKADE AND THE FUTURE OF ARCHITECTURE

text and images by Karl Loescher

In the verdant hills north of Vallejo, California, Thomas Kinkade's latest business venture provokes the question – is he the future of architecture?

Andy Warhol would likely have been proud of Thomas Kinkade. More than just a painter, Thomas Kinkade has established himself as a life-style brand whose equally fierce embrace of Christian values and the magic of merchandising has earned him the self-proclaimed title of "Most Collected Living Artist." Indeed, it is not entirely surprising to learn that there is little apparent separation between Thomas Kinkade and "Thomas Kinkade, Painter of Light," a trademark owned by the publicly traded Media Arts Group, Inc. (NYSE-MDA) in which Kinkade is a primary investor. Produced in limited numbers, the works appear in various sizes, on various media, and with varying degrees of participation by actual painters, making the merchandise available at numerous price-points and levels of collectibility. This sophisticated production scheme is buttressed on the retail side by a network of 4,500 dealers across the country, a show devoted entirely to his work on the QVC television shopping network, and licensing agreements with companies as diverse as the Franklin Mint and La-Z-Boy. The end effect of this saturation is that Kinkade's depictions of hazy cottages set in flower-filled landscapes are becoming increasingly pervasive signifiers of the ideal community. Though his subject matter is not exclusively buildings, architectural subjects dominate his works. Kinkade's website breaks down his paintings (more properly lithographs) intoseventeen categories, including Bridges, Churches and Cottages, all surrounded by lush thickets of Miracle-Gro vegetation.

Given the frequency of architectural imagery in Kinkade's paintings, it is not entirely surprising that one of his most publicized commercial ventures has been actually building one of the Arcadian communities that appear in his paintings. In partnership with international construction firm Taylor Woodrow, The Village at Hiddenbrooke "builds the vision of Thomas Kinkade" in the most idealized form that housing can take - a gated community. Strategically located between San Francisco and the Napa Valley, it snugly nests the eighteen holes of an Arnold Palmer-designed golf course. Kinkade's vision is available in four models, starting $355,000, a populist price for the Bay Area. Slightly more distinguishing collectors can purchase the most extravagant model, the Merritt (all four models are named after Kinkade's daughters) at $400,000 - turreted guesthouse not included. Like his paintings, whose authorship is complicated by the fact that they are actually lithographs highlighted by members of his atelier and dotted with Kinkade's DNA, the design work is outsourced to the Irvine-based architecture firm, William Hezmalhalch Architects. The unimaginative firm portfolio shows them capable of reproducing the nostalgic utopias imagined by Kinkade.

There is a qualitative disconnect between the idealized communities depicted in Kinkade's paintings and the development itself. An abbreviated landscaping budget prevented the yards from achieving the full bloom of the paintings and, aside from a scattering of turrets, it would be hard to distinguish the four house models from those in any other suburban development.

Capturing picturesque effect in built form is a notoriously difficult exercise for architects working in their chosen medium, let alone painters provoked by the market to build. Architectural shortcomings of this sort are commonly corrected for publication, and many will recall times when a visit to a project admired in a glossy publication, like *El Croquis*, is disappointing in person. Whether through the agency of photographer or painter, architecture often yields a more pleasing countenance when, like a yearbook photo, it has its blemishes removed.

A visit to The Village reveals that the standard criticisms about exclusivity, lack of public transit, and homogeneity apply equally to the Kinkadian community as to any gated development. Although the scope of Kinkade's "vision" wisely avoids notions of class and racial segregation, that purified vista is revealed on the interiors of the houses - subject matter rarely seen in his paintings. Here, in a remarkable feat of salesmanship, the model homes are outfitted with a clever array of prop furnishings - wedding photos on dressers, the sounds of Glenn Miller and the smell of bread baking leave the impression that each house is only temporarily empty while the Jones family attends church for the morning.

As much as these complaints serve to distance Kinkade from the serious work of "big A" Architecture, they also conceal how much he has in common with those same signature architects. For just as Kinkade's business ventures lead him from painting buildings to building them, the seduction of commerce leads the rock stars of architecture gradually away from building.

left & right:
Kinkadian Landscapes: The Village at Itiddenbrooke, Valejo, California

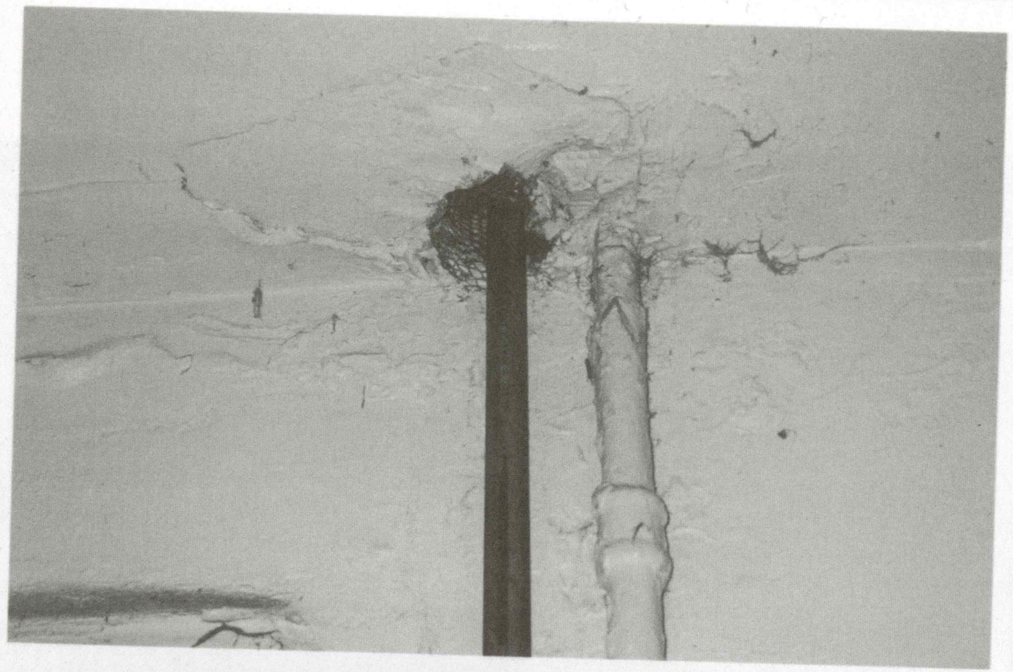
For what the two seemingly diametrically opposed groups have in common is "branding" a word which now is finding itself atop architecture syllabi everywhere. For some academics, this new interest in branding is a hopeful new justification for architectural quality, one which will render design essential for the wealthy corporate clients name-brand architects prefer. Best represented in built form by Koolhaas's recent Prada adventures and, ideologically, by *The Harvard Guide to Shopping*, this endorsement of the architect as brand-builder has increasingly been accompanied by architects themselves behaving like brands. Individuals such as Michael Graves are engaging in areas of commerce heretofore foreign to architectural practice and managing their names with the same aggressiveness that has put Kinkade on La-Z-Boys.

Apart from the occasional designer/developer such as Luis Barragàn or John Portman, architects have been largely confined to the sidelines of merchandising. Like painters working prior to the canvas, the size of architectural works, their site specificity, and the difficulties encountered through mass production have made architecture's relationship to commerce one of facilitating it through built works, but never fully participating in it as a commodity. Preston Scott Cohen's limited-edition digital prints entitled "Toroidal Architecture," marketed by the Thomas Erben Gallery, OMA's inexplicably vacuous book on color, or any other project in an ever-growing list, marks a shift towards an architectural product that is easily purchased and consumed.

Will the architectural embrace of commercialism be used as a new vehicle for architectural ideas? The response from Ye Olde Architecture Profession is tough to gauge. One just has to get one whiff of *Fountainhead* to know that Capitalism versus Social Responsibility is a common design dilemma. Our painterly guide gives some sort of answer. With the imperative voice of a bumper sticker, Kinkade manages to use his products as a medium. He conveys his faith in each coffee mug, mouse pad and lithograph sold.

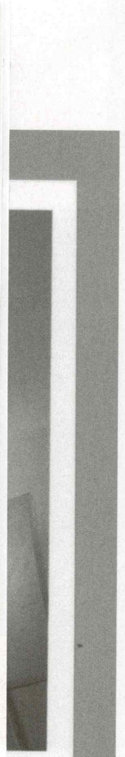
{ THE PUBLIC SPACE OF THE PRISON }

Text and images by Craig Willse



At the beginning of the twenty-first century, how can we productively interrogate not only the concept of public housing, but even public space? In this information age of accelerating globalization, many of our conceptual categories begin to break down. Edge city, suburbia, domesticity, and civic sphere lose some of their coherency and relevance as, for example, the speed of public transport extends the boundaries of the city and as private sector corporations take on more and more functions we previously associated with the state. A vocabulary that presupposes stable or natural spatial formations inadequately prepares us for the challenge of homelessness, the obliteration of affordable housing, and the fortification of unsafe and substandard living conditions for millions of the United States poor. On the other hand, moving an analysis of public housing out of a narrow conversation of housing per se – by discussing private housing versus public, rent-control versus market forces, ghettoization versus mixed-income communities – allows us to think of housing as one mode in a total system of organizing populations and bodies. Hence we might look at the creation and devolution of public housing alongside the demolition of mental health facilities under Ronald Reagan, the growth of corporate business improvement districts in the management of urban hot spots, and the closing off of social services and education to undocumented migrants. Looking at the U.S. prison industry also exposes something about the space of public housing and the control of populations.

At an obvious level, in the white supremacist, racist, capitalist United States, public housing and prisons both exist to maintain and control similar and often overlapping sets of people: poor people, immigrants, and people of color. Just as the rhetoric of crime and safety veils a thinly coded racism and war on the poor, the language of public housing (from debates about an apparent culture of poverty to plans for developing "self-sufficiency" in residents) evidences an entrenched and racist belief that poverty stems from personal irresponsibility rather than structural market forces. So the continual reproduction of "criminal classes" that meets and justifies the economic demands of the prison industry occasions another targeting of these same residents of prisons and public housing. In former mayor Rudolph Guiliani's new New York City the connections are painfully clear: the eradication of affordable housing programs and the drastic reduction of homeless shelter beds accompanied the creation of "quality of life" crimes that in fact criminalized the very displacement caused by administration housing policies. Homeless people looking to spend a night on the train but arrested for jumping subway turnstiles found themselves inserted into New York's most generously funded housing for the poor – jails and prisons. In this sense, to examine the "public" of public housing, we might look not so much at concrete forms of construction, but rather the circuitous movement of money and bodies.

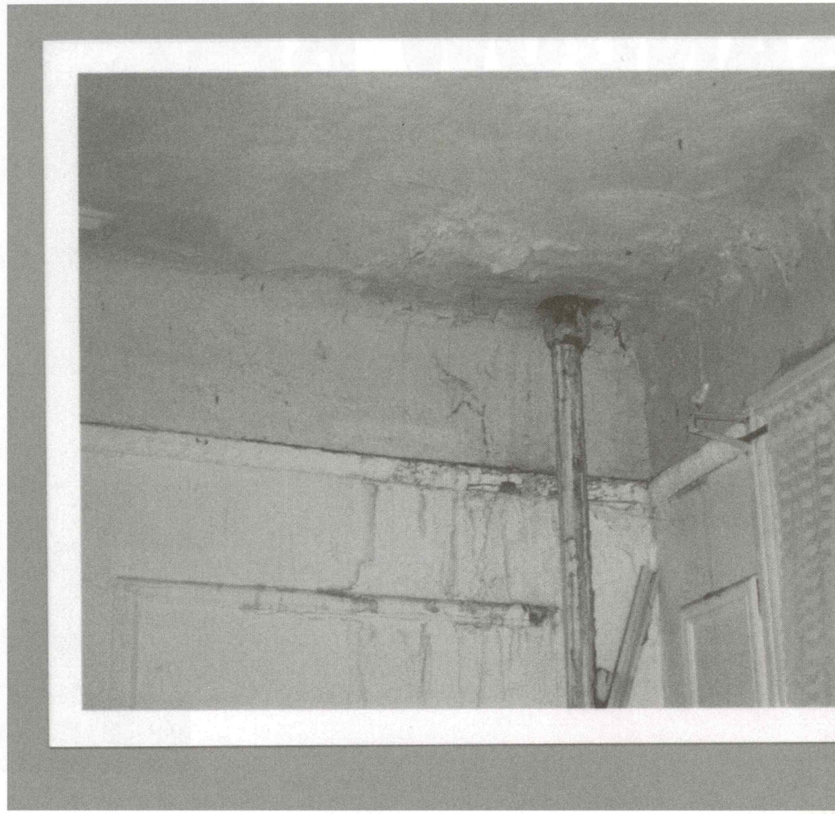


At a talk in New York City, activist and writer Angela Davis posed the question, Where is the space of the prison-industrial complex? Her own reply – everywhere – required the audience to reconsider formal architectural divisions that suggest a temporal and geographic containment within walls (in this case, prison walls) and to imagine instead the thorough prisonization of American social space over the past three decades. To think about how those of us outside prison confines move through the prison-industrial complex brings to mind the sale and purchase in the private market of consumer goods manufactured in prisons, the economic revitalization of post-industrial small towns with the creation of prison jobs, and the development of technologies of surveillance that track and police civic and domestic arenas, among other occurrences. In pointing out the reach of our implication in prisons, Davis effectively demonstrates the responsibility we all have in their maintenance.

While much important writing and organizing has taken place around the crucial issue of the private prison (for-profit institutions run by state-contracted corporations), drawing from the insight provided by Davis, I wish to add to that conversation a consideration of the publicity of prisons that refuses a binary of state/corporate to explore how a carceral logic deforms the space of the public, and the very body politic of the public itself. We can clearly see how the prison shrinks the public sphere by instating a system of labor colonies with a continually growing population that currently exceeds two million people. We must also look towards such instances as the disenfranchisement of former prisoners who have been stripped of voting rights – thirty-one percent of adult Black men in Florida cannot vote – and in so doing see how the borders of the prison bleed out into larger social space and the bodies of "convicts" continue their incarceration in the civic spheres.

While voting rights may seem to some a symbolic loss with no practical consequences in the context of our Republicrat electoral politics, in terms of housing, the implications of the of the extended carceral space manifest clearly and disastrously. We can look briefly at three forms of housing for a marginalized public: what we traditionally call public housing, private market low-income housing and homeless shelters. Applications to state-run public housing projects can now be rejected solely on the basis of former convictions. Given the over-exposure of people of color to the criminal injustice system, this obviously impacts an enormous segment of those seeking public housing. In the private housing market in New York City, tenants with drug convictions can find themselves evicted regardless of any aspect of their tenancy. While some landlords can use this policy as a way of emptying buildings of long-standing rent stabilized tenants in gentrifying neighborhoods with increasing rents, these cases may also effectively be brought through pressure from the District Attorney's office whether the landlord wishes to evict or not. Finally, someone seeking a bed in a city run shelter for the night will encounter an ID check to see if any outstanding warrants exist; again such a person's options at that point include possible arrest for violating a quality of life law on the subway or street, or certain arrest at a shelter/ante-prison.

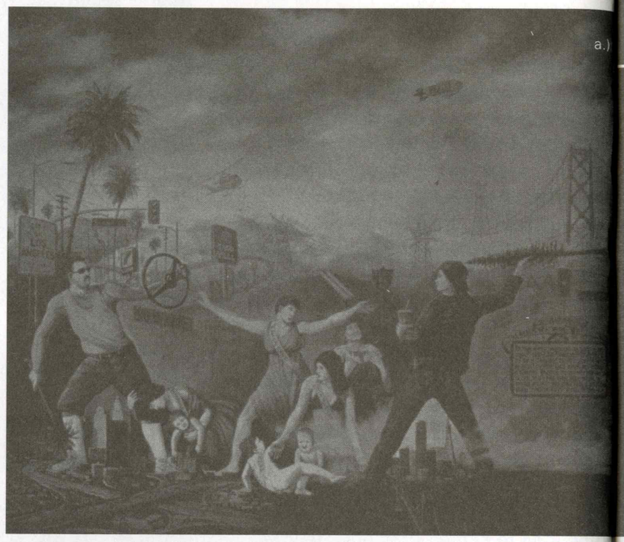
When we remember that finding and keeping appropriate housing is often a basic term of parole; we can understand parole as a technology of carceral logic. By no means a method for releasing "dangerous criminals" early (the racist media myth), parole very much functions to extend prison sentences indefinitely, as former convicts are returned to prison for minor infractions. The impossibility of securing shelter almost guarantees, directly (violating parole) or indirectly (provoking illegal activities like being homeless), the continual return of the prison-laborer to the prison camp.



The prisonization of cities effectively creates permanent convicts with no place to belonging outside the prison cell. Home becomes a site of displacement, a location of criminalization. It does not seem a coincidence that new restrictions on who can qualify for public housing arrive at a time when cities across the country are demolishing high-rise buildings that contain thousands of units and replacing them with low-rise townhouse developments that can meet only a fraction of the present need. These new townhouses, "public housing-lite," will integrate more seamlessly into an urbane, rather than urban, aesthetic refiguration of the cityscape that benefits gentrification and the displacement of the poor.

So we can think of prisons and public housing in terms Sze Tsung Leong's characterization of control space: "Control space is engineered and obsessively sought after as a survival mechanism within increasingly irrational, volatile, competitive, and voracious markets.... It is the solution to a desperation born of the constant threat of terminal decline." In this sense we can see how public housing loses its former social welfare function and comes to serve the needs of a globalizing economy that refashions city centers into tourist enclaves. We can also see, of course, how prisons do not in any sense serve to reform criminals but rather to form new industries and labor forces. As what we used to call cities come undone around us, public and private fold into one another, producing the public space of the prison and the prison space of public housing: the prison is everywhere, the home is nowhere.

LOUD PAPER INTERVIEWS
SANDOW BIRK
BY MARLIN WATSON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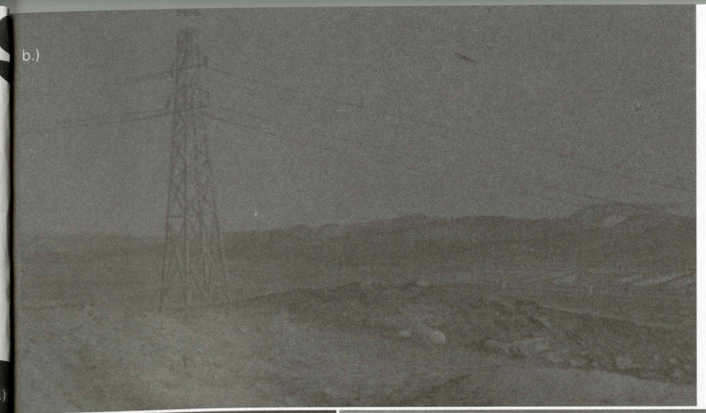
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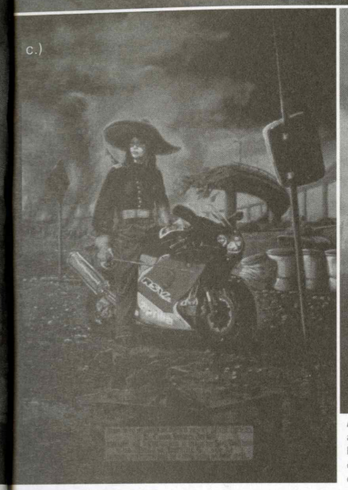
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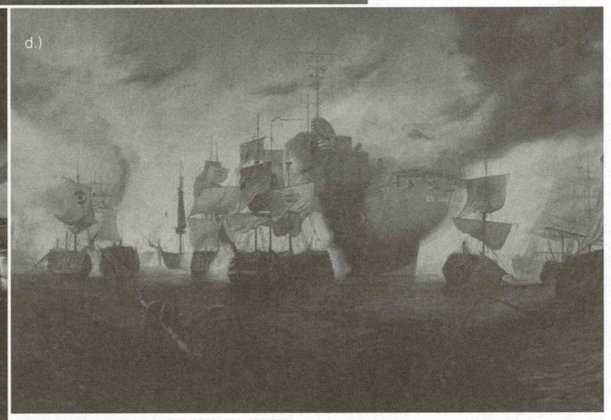
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ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF CATHERINE CLARK GALLERY
a.) *Analogy of the Great War of the Californias*, 1998
b.) *High Desert State Prison – Susanville CA*, 2001
c.) *Portrait of L. Comm Rebecca Jordan*, 1998
d.) *The Triumph of San Francisco*, 1998

SANDOW BIRK'S PAINTINGS EMBODY THE DECAYING SPIRIT OF MODERN TIMES AND THE DANCE BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH IN THE CITY. THE EMOTIONAL GRAVITY CAPTURED IN HIS WORK REFLECTS HIS ADMIRATION FOR THE HEROIC PAINTINGS BY OLD MASTERS. IN PAYING HOMAGE TO THEM AND UPDATING THEIR SETTING TO THE CONTEMPORARY CITY, BIRK COMBINES THE PATTERNING AND COMPOSITION OF THESE PAINTINGS WITH THE WHOLLY REAL EFFECTS OF DAILY LIFE IN THE MIDST OF URBAN DECAY.

LP: YOU HAVE A STRONG AFFECTION FOR NEOCLASSICAL PAINTINGS...
SB: When I first went to art school my concentration was eighteenth and nineteenth-century painting. The paintings that I'm now using as the base for my work are ones I studied in school. For example, my painting, *The Death of Manuel*, is based on Gerard David's, *The Death of Marat*. The original painting is a depiction of someone's death, but David took death, and through the use light and paint created a romantic drama. The role of painting within art traditions is changing, and I would venture that it is probably at its lowest point right now, in part due to the omni-presence of television and the primacy of the moving image. Back in the 1700s and 1800s many artists were engaged in the painting of images of war, largely to convince the population that it was worth sacrificing their sons to the fight. This use of painting as a form of propaganda, contributed to the development of its new subject, the romanticization of death. The whole idea of this school of painting was not to record the truth about what happened, but to romanticize it, transform it into the heroic. I believe that gangs – their symbolism and imagery – operate in the same frame of mind.

LP: HOW DOES YOUR AUDIENCE, BOTH ESTABLISHED AND NEW, REACT TO THIS TYPE OF POLITICALLY AND RACIALLY CHARGED WORK?
SB: One time, about ten years ago, I had a show called "Gang Paintings." Immediately the gallery began receiving phone calls. People were interested in the show because it had the tag line "gang," and so everyone was calling in and trying to get more information about the artist. Most of them were curious about my racial identity. "Is he Hispanic?" they asked and the gallery would respond "No, he's White." People would seem offended, simply because I'm White. The subject matter of my paintings is American Culture, not just Los Angeles and its ethnicities.

LP: YOU USED TO LIVE OFF ADAMS AND CRENSHAW IN LOS ANGELES?
SB: I taught high school for a year in South Central. I was working and painting at the same time. While I was teaching, I'd be drawing on the back of papers! I'd draw diagrams of the hairstyles and clothing the kids were wearing. I'd copy the graffiti from the walls. That's when I met one of Compton's district attorneys. She is a prosecutor for the D.A. Gang Unit and so all of her cases involve gang-related crimes. A lot of people think my paintings are too violent, but I am not making up stories. The real stories the D.A. would tell me were horrific! To research a theme I would sit through a gang trial for a few days and then go to the scene where the crime actually happened. I did a couple of small paintings at the scene, but normally I would just draw the crime and record the day and time.

LP: DID YOU HAVE GANG MEMBERS COME TO THE GALLERY SHOWS?
SB: When I first started painting, I was really worried about their attitudes towards my work. But the guys were really in to them and started to tell me what was wrong with my portrayal of them. Things like, why this gang member wouldn't be wearing these clothes or why this guy wouldn't be on this street. In one painting, I'll paint the Bloods. In the next I'll paint the Crips. Then I'll paint one with everyone in them. The first paintings had all Blacks, the next had all Asians and the next had all Mexicans. Then I started putting them all in the same scene. I began trying to integrate all of these "rules" into one painting that could never exist in the reality of the setting.

LP: WHEN DID YOU DECIDE TO INCORPORATE GRAFFITI INTO YOUR ART?
SB: I had been looking at graffiti a lot. There is an elementary school near where I live. One afternoon, there were some kids walking by with a sketchbook. I asked the kids whose book it was and they said they had borrowed it from a graffiti artist. I saw it, and told them I wanted to meet him. Through meeting this one artist I eventually met more graffiti artists. I began to use graffiti as the background of the painting and then I would paint over them. Eventually I would give a guy a white canvas and show him the classical painting I was going to copy so he'd know where the subject would be and where the blank spaces were. Every graffiti artist has his own style. One graffiti artist, Devin Flynn, added a whole new dimension to my work by becoming totally involved in the process. He would study the picturesof the classical paintings and try to incorporate images that reflected what was going on.

LP: WHAT DIRECTION WILL YOU BE TAKING YOUR WORK NEXT?
SB: I think I'll start doing paintings of actual events, reality is so appalling.

Lilliput Lane's own William Morris, David Tate

JUST WHAT IS IT THAT MAKES YESTERDAY'S HOMES SO DIFFERENT, SO APPEAL-ING?

by sam jacob and FAT

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1. LILLIPUT

I remember the first time I saw them was in the duty free shop at Brussels airport: a tiered display of mini-cottages set against a backdrop of Belgian chocolate and cigars. I imagined them as the visual equivalent of eating, drinking and smoking the entire contents of the shop. Not being one for health food or abstinence, I was delighted sometime later, to be invited to tour Lilliput Lane. Lilliput Lane makes miniature models of historically specific vernacular buildings. The company, established in 1992 by David Tate, an ex-SAS-turned-GRP mould expert-turned-bankrupt-turned-vernacular guru/millionaire, now produce thousands of miniatures depicting buildings from the British Isles, and more recently from other northern European regions and the Anglo-Saxon Diaspora. With collectors all over the world, Lilliput quickly became the market leader in the miniature vernacular buildings and received The Queen's Award for Enterprise. Consequently, Enesco, a worldwide giftware conglomerate, acquired the company.

Margaret Thatcher and David Tate, 1992

The manufacturing center for Lilliput Lane is based in Skirsgill, Cumbria, off Junction 26 of the M6 – Gateway to the Lake District. On the far side of the car park is the visitor's center, commonly referred to as Honeysuckle Cottage. It is an almost faithful replica of a seventeenth-century cottage in Hampshire, England and a tribute to Honeysuckle Cottage, was of the first miniatures produced by Lilliput Lane. Since the initial miniature production there have been about nine different versions made in varying sizes and prices. Looking at the Honeysuckle One model, you can feel the scrape of David Tate's tool in a kind of folk-art-man-shifts-matter way. Over the series the modeling is refined as if made by tiny elves. Each model also revises the original architecture: moving windows around, altering doorways, shifting the pitch of the thatch. These are grand experiments the picturesque. The plants around the house grow bigger and more important, making every English cottage defined as much by the roses around the window as the thatched roof and porch. Dovecotes appear, disappear, are replaced by wells. Sleeping dogs, cats pawing goldfish, a wandering old man with a wide brimmed black hat: all these elements work together to create a miniature meditation on the pastoral. What starts as a prosaic model of a building becomes an epic romantic poem on the aura of a cottage. It even looks hazy, as your gaze it captured by it; you are swept away to a summer's day and a ploughman's picnic. What begins as an architectural model eventually becomes a model of a place in time. This series of models argue that architecture is not as important as what you think of it.

The visitor's center itself is an exercise in the vernacular. No camping around for its audience, this is a building that uses authentic materials and construction methods. The antithesis of a themed thing, its *raison d'être* is not effect or experience, but rather, impact as document. Its dryness makes its sigh of nostalgia, eloquent and complex. The real oak beam and peg construction, restrictive building codes that led to a battle with the planning officer over the appropriateness of thatch, the loud neighboring car park and highway – the whole project demonstrates the struggle of making history present today. The house is an expression of longing for the past – not just as image, but really, real.

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II. MASS PRODUCTION

Surprisingly at Lilliput Lane – where one expects a crucible of kitsch – one finds a place where both Prince Charles and modernists nod in agreement.

Despite the claims on its packaging to be handcrafted, Lilliput Lane relies on industrialized production. (Only the original modeling is done by hand.) Nevertheless, there is a fine line between craftsmanship and piecework. It is a product and needs to be packed up and shipped off to duty-free concessions and mantelpieces around the world. Ever since Le Corbusier published a picture of a Citröen juxtaposed with the Parthenon, architects have longed for a more fruitful relationship between buildings and mass production. The allure of mass production makes it seem inevitable and impending. Though every time an architect talks about mass production, the end result is a highly crafted haute couture building (think of Future Systems' Media Center at Lords). Because the idea is so entrenched in modernist myth it almost seems plausible. Architecture aspires to mass production; Lilliput Lane aspires to be hand crafted. There is nothing architects would like more than to really be a part of the modern world and there is nothing Lilliput Lane would like more than for us not to be. Lilliput Lane is mass-produced because it's popular; high architecture, because it's not.

"LILLIPUT LANE WOULD LIKE MORE THAN FOR US NOT TO BE. LILLIPUT LANE IS MASS-PRODUCED BECAUSE IT'S POPULAR; HIGH ARCHITECTURE, BECAUSE IT'S NOT."

III. CULTURE

Lilliput Lane is driven by the personality of David Tate. His love, regard and knowledge of British vernacular heritage inspires the company. Tate gives us insight into Lilliput's research and design strategies on a speed limit exceeding tour of the Lake District – he can spot vernacular architecture while pulling G's in his XJ6. Perhaps his miniature world is akin to the rural viewed as a motion blur from the white leather lined turbo-powered, GPS-navigated interior of a performance sports car: a relationship between nature and the city Peter Smithson named ruburb. Tate's interest in the historical vernacular has echoes of the idealism of Pre-Raphelite and Arts and Crafts movements. This is reflected in the organization of his company (in his eyes) as an association of craftsmen, just like Ruskin's Guild of St. George or William Morris' company. Although Lilliput workers might also be described as minimum wage piece workers on a semi-Fordist production line.

Ruskin's childhood love of the Lake District drew him to establish a kind of education center in Brantwood on Coniston Water. Both these characters, Morris and Ruskin, were part of a Victorian movement that acknowledged the problems of industrialization and mass production. Both were concerned with its impact upon society, cities and the soul.

Ruskin recognized and articulated the growing popularity of the picturesque in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as a reaction to industrialization; focusing on the social and moral effects of industrialization. He argued that the popular love of the picturesque indicates a vague desire for pastoral simplicities in the face of a general dissatisfaction with contemporary life. He proposed that dissatisfaction is the natural condition of modern man in the modern cityscape and that the picturesque fills a vacuum we feel is forming within us as our morality shrinks: the picturesque is about loss. The tragic narrative of the picturesque is told through the relationship of figure to building to landscape.

Ruskin's social and moral consciousness pricked the sentimentality of the picturesque, like having John Lennon perched on one shoulder and Paul McCartney on the other. John: a "*Day in the Life*" noble form, of which Joseph Turner was Ruskin's favorite example, produced by "an expression of suffering, of poverty, or decay, nobly endured by unpretending strength of heart... the picturesqueness is in the unconscious suffering." Where the moral conscience of the artists empathizes with the social meaning of the scene. Paul: an "Ob-Le-Di Ob-Le-Da "-esq surface-picturesque, which concerned itself with texture at the expense of emotion. Or, as John Lydon put it, " a cheap holiday in other people's misery."

Both Ruskin and Lydon recognize the political implications of the picturesque.

The Victorian impulse to improve the future through social reform led to design as media. In an era of purpose and possibility Victorian reformers such as Morris or Ebeneezer Howard looked to create and design the society of tomorrow-to build the New Jerusalem that William Blake described. A blend of Victorian philosophy, modernism, socialism and communism and a Ruskinesque modern-life-is-rubbish feeling – Lilliput Lane suggests an equally creative but retroactive impulse to improve the past. Perhaps upgrading our heritage is a more effective way of altering our present condition. Of course, the reality of Ruskin's rural life is different from ours. Living standards have improved. We are blessed with the welfare state, high-speed transport, telecommunications and digital TV. Our misery is different. And so is our relationship to nature, especially what we do with it. Indeed, if Ruskin had still been around at Brantwood on January 4, 1967, his rural idyll would have been momentarily shattered by a thoroughly modern tragedy as Donald Campbell's speedboat flipped while attempting a World Water Speed Record on Coniston Water. Incidentally, there is a series of meaningless coincidences between Ruskin, Campbell and Lilliput Lane: a memorial to Donald Campbell was built by a local man, John Usher, whose hobby was building miniature houses. On his death, he bequeathed his homemade miniature villages to Coniston. They are now displayed at the Ruskin Museum.

The novelist E.M. Forster described Surrey as a "landscape of amenity." In these terms the Lake District is a fully serviced wilderness. There's a Coke machine at the top of the Kirkstone pass to refresh ramblers who require refreshment in the wild. In the Lake District there is nothing unusual in glimpsing an ex-military amphibious vehicle behind a dry stone wall carrying city-slicker outward bounders.

The technologies of English pleasure are scattered across the sweeping epic hills and lakeshores. Observe the vista of pressurized gas frying up a Full English Breakfast, piping hot sugary tea held between twin stainless steel walls of a vacuum flask, breathable fabrics, deck chairs and caravans. A landscape populated by a thousand vacationing Reyner Banhams. The only real nature is the geographical mass of the hills casting an electromagnetic shadow across the car radio reception and mobile phone conversations.

IV. CONCLUSION

The title of this piece is cribbed from Richard Hamilton's 1956 collage of a domestic scene created with using cut out magazine pictures of products. Suburban architecture works like that, except that its raw material is the pool of history. It is historical pop. The suburban template is like a best-of compilation of vernacular-isms, full of feel good golden oldie romantic jams. A collection of picturesque killer hooks. It is thousands of years of Anglo-Saxon mythology with a car porch. the Anglo-Saxon Blues. What Sir Edwin Lutyens and Philip Webb compiled pangs our sentimental hearts as cynically as any love song. And like all great love songs, it is about loss. The suburbs bleed across the land to heal our pain. Architects only hurt themselves when they mock mock-Tudor. What David Tate and Lilliput Lane offer is the powerful combination of extreme visual obsession and an over-reaching desire for love. In Ruskin's words, "the greatest thing a human soul ever does in this world is to see something, and tell what it saw in a plain way. To see clearly is poetry, prophecy and religion – all in one." It is also what makes it culture, not art. If architects hope to engage with anything outside the pages of the *Architectural Review*, they need to start loving more.

ROBBF

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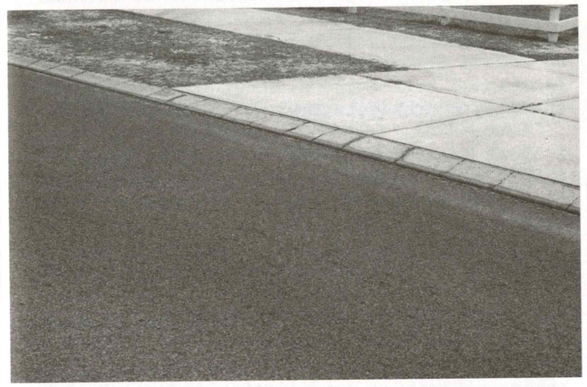
BIG-A, LITTLE-H

(A SUBURB WITHOUT ARCHITECTURE)

TEXT BY ROBERT COOK AND PHOTOS BY TONY NATHAN



There was no Architecture in the yawning suburban sprawl of my antipodean childhood. Big-A Architecture was this grand thing that happened elsewhere, this grand thing that scary-serious guys and girls in black roll-neck sweaters did instead of real work. In fact, Architecture as I figured it, was clearly the hot breadth of a dusty continent away where Jorn Utzon's Sydney Opera House postured as some undeniable cultural achievement. Instead of all this unabashed high-status finery, Us simple suburban folk had houses-plain, simple, no-muss, no-fuss, little-h houses.

My family's home like my neighbors' and pretty much everyone else's in the 'burb, was an A.V. Jennings model. A locally owned company, the Jennings mob did a roaring trade throughout the seventies with their small range of brick types and bedroom and bathroom configurations. Hell, they even went so far as to offer a game room as a fancy optional extra for those who'd fork out a buck or two more. Built in 1974, ours was plunked down in the coastal suburb of Hillarys, about twenty kilometers or so North of Western Australia's riverside capital city, Perth. It was, and remains for that matter, a sandy-colored number, featuring a green concrete driveway, a back patio with a painted white aluminum shade, three bedrooms, fiberglass batt insulation, clay roof tiles, a living area with adjoining kitchen, a lounge, rippled asbestos fences, one bathroom and eight-foot high ceilings. Pretty impressive.

It seemed to do the job and the dinky spaces grew to have important meanings. What we called "the living room" was full of the horizon-expanding optimism of television. Cartoons and sitcoms had to be hastily switched off when dad came back from work. The lounge was for "entertaining" or suffering (for one's apparent betterment) the tedious drone of classical music. Bedrooms were places where, within certain frugal limitations, one could make one's mark on the physical world through a semaphore of posters and whatever knick-knacks were handy. It was the same for all of my friends. Some places smelt better than others did, some looked a bit cleaner, some had more relaxed parents, but as structures, they sure as hell weren't Architecture.

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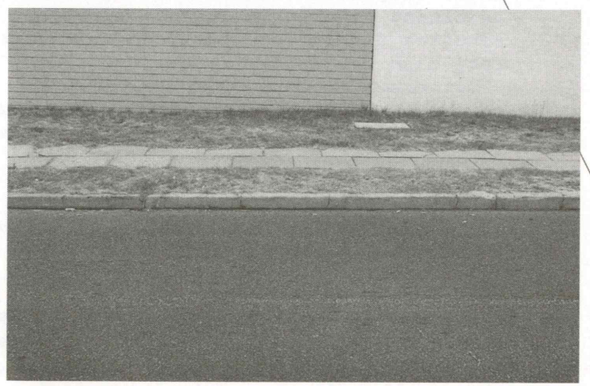
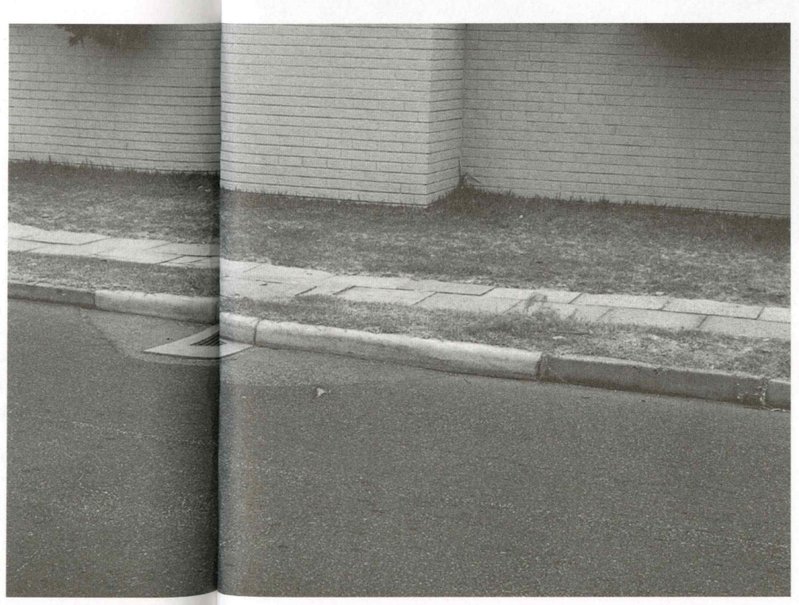


Not that this was a totally bad thing. After all, this state of affairs offered the opportunity for the exercise of certain freedoms. While our domestic living structures only catered to the individual needs of particular families, couples or singles by extreme fluke, they presented a lifetime's opportunity for both substantial and minor tinkering. The intricately choreographed cadences of weekend adding-on, re-planting, re-paving, re-painting, re-wallpapering gave a kind of meaning to life as one of the few remaining forms of socially sanctioned self-expression in a culture of chaffing professionalism.

Now I fully admit to speculating here, but I think that Architecture - especially the crisp, clean modernist variety - intimidates this kind of prosaic creativity out of existence. In most cases, if we believe Architect-designed houses are machines made for living, their upkeep seems better left in the hands of capable experts. So, while Architecture might open up certain pleasures, some of them quite breathtaking, it doesn't easily admit the uniquely private pleasures of hands-on, amateur experimentation and plain, old dicking-around. Instead, we somehow feel we should stand back and demurely appreciate, becoming in the process disenfranchised schmucks in our own homes. (I am of course, heavily projecting here. No doubt those more gracious than I, those folk born to Architecture will have a different take on the matter.)

Yet, Architecture could have offered us something that the happy amateur dabblers probably couldn't make on their own. For one thing, thoughtful Architecture might have endowed our lives with at least a modicum of casual beauty and easy chic. How much more glamorous would it have been to take one's afternoon nap on a Le Corbusier-styled deck *sans soleile*, instead of sweating to fitful sleep amidst the flies and bugs on the blisteringly hot patio? We would have been different people. In particular, inspired Architecture would have made us more open, socially generous folk.

I mean this. You'd swear our suburban houses were purposely designed to be as aloof and stand-offish as possible. Hidden by a labyrinthine arrangement of permanently dying native fauna (wattle, bottlebrush, withered gums, couch grass and wild wheat,) our houses rudely averted their eyes from the street. They exuded nothing but brick "go-away" vibes. The problem wasn't just the rudeness; it was the insidious fact that whenever you walked down the street, you could feel a hundred eyes beading in at you from behind the curtains of their suburban panopticons-seeing but not being seen. Jeremy Bentham, Michael Foucault and Jean Paul Sartre would have had a field day.



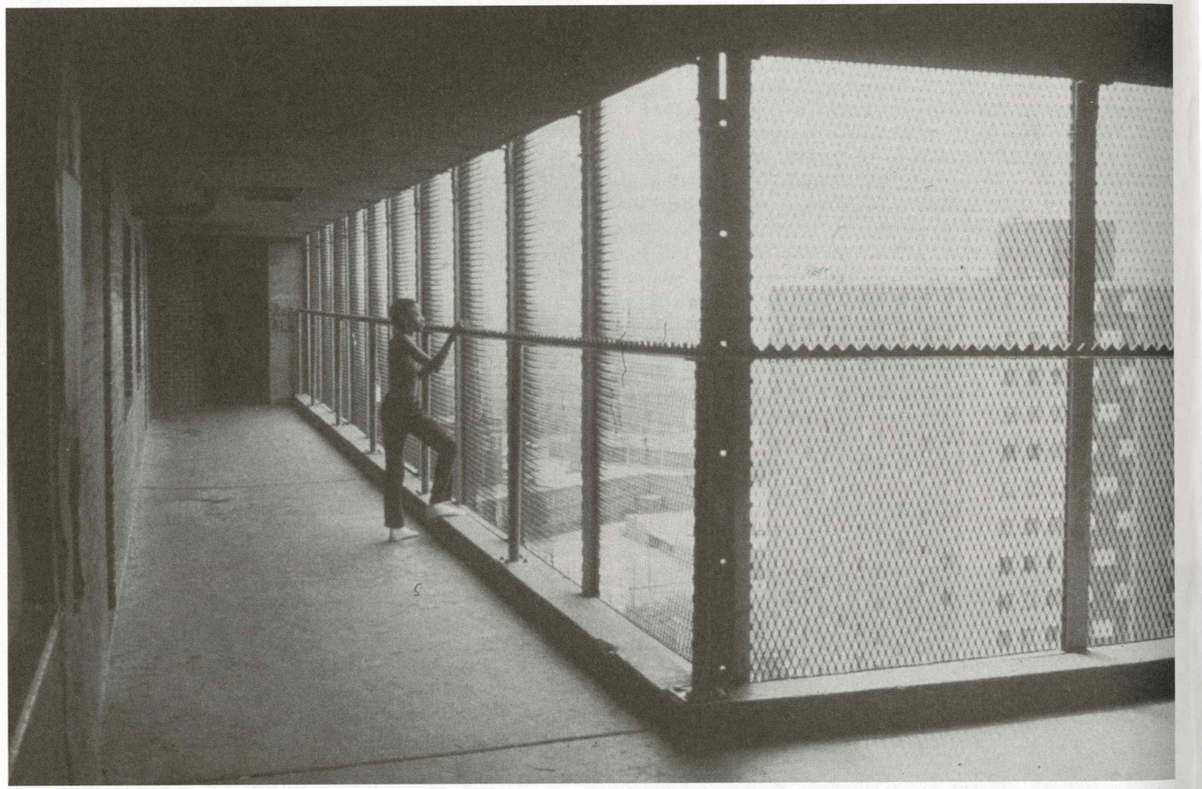
In this context, adults became virtual shut-ins, never going anywhere except under the safe camouflage of the car. For us suburban kids it was slightly different. We biked in packs around the roads and sauntered through the vacant lots of our equally childish suburb, fooling around in water catchment areas, making cubbies amidst felled gum trees. There was safety in the company of a crowd. I reckon that our cultural clinicians might argue that the Northern 'burbs of seventies Western Australia bred their own insidious variant of agoraphobia. To this day, grown-ups rarely go walking unless night has first fallen on their self-consciousness. In fact, when the sun goes down, the pathways are flooded with the otherwise alien life forms of power-walkers, joggers, strollers and dog walkers. Though this has partly to do with the heat (and needing to keep out of it), it has as much to do with avoiding the gaze of the judgmental eyes that follow you down the street like those hiding in the paintings in every episode of *Scooby Doo*.

What could have saved the grown-ups from these nocturnal lives is simple: properly constructed verandahs and amiably designed front porches. These would be places where people could comfortably sit and chat with friends or loved ones, have a beer, read the paper. The point is that these social outposts would have opened us up to each other and allowed a social exchange to take place in the form of a casual nod or two. This reciprocity of glances is no small thing. It is the very foundation of a generous, kind-spirited community. And I should add that this is no pie-in-the-sky daydream, it can happen. In the older areas of Perth where the Californian Bungalows and Federation style domiciles gather amidst the sociable shade of their porches such feelings are alive and well. I live in such a place now and I swear you'd be hard pressed finding a more chipper place to stroll.

So the solution is clear. We need some sort of casual, neighborly meeting between Architects and the everyday Joes and Jills of the Northern suburbs. Until that happens I guess I'll find the streets of my childhood suburb empty. The only evidence of life being the unmistakable whine of power saws and the bang of hammering as strange structures and bizarre interior decorating is carried out safely, behind close doors, and with Architecture a world away.

CAMILO JOSE VERGARA

BY ANDREW WAGNER



16th floor of 1239 Racine corner of Roosevelt Road, Chicago

CAMILO JOSE VERGARA HAS BEEN DOCUMENTING ARCHITECTURAL DECLINE FOR OVER 25 YEARS NOW. DURING THIS TIME, THE CHILEAN-BORN, NEW YORK-BASED WRITER AND PHOTOGRAPHER HAS FOUND HIMSELF CRISSCROSSING THE UNITED STATES, DELVING INTO THE DETERIORATING FABRIC OF PLACES LIKE THE SOUTH BRONX, DETROIT, NEWARK, GARY, THE SOUTHSIDE OF CHICAGO, AND ALL THE WAY OUT TO THE HEART OF LATINO LOS ANGELES. VERGARA'S UNCEASING PROJECT HAS PRODUCED TWO MAMMOTH BOOKS – 1995'S *THE NEW AMERICAN GHETTO* AND 1999'S *AMERICAN RUINS* – THAT ONE MIGHT BE TEMPTED TO CALL BIBLES OF ARCHITECTURAL DYSFUNCTION IN THIS COUNTRY OVER THE PAST QUARTER CENTURY. THESE EPIC OEUVRES, DEDICATED TO AMERICA'S FORGOTTEN RELICS, HAVE INEVITABLY LED VERGARA TO MANY OF THE MOST INFAMOUS (AND IN SOME CASES, VANISHED) EXPERIMENTS IN PUBLIC HOUSING (OFTEN REFERRED TO AS "POOR WAREHOUSING") AMERICA HAS TO OFFER: THE MARCUS GARVEY PROJECTS IN BROOKLYN, UNITY PLAZA IN EAST NEW YORK, AND WASHINGTON PARK HOUSES AND CABRINI-GREEN ON THE SOUTHSIDE OF CHICAGO TO NAME JUST A FEW.

THE DOCUMENTARIAN'S STUNNING PHOTOGRAPHS AND WRITING PAINT AN EERIE AND CHILLING PICTURE OF THE DEPRESSED LANDSCAPE OF THESE PROJECTS. IN *AMERICAN RUINS*, VERGARA DESCRIBES ONE OF HIS VISITS TO THE WASHINGTON PARK HOUSES IN CHICAGO IN SUCH VIVID DETAIL AND WITH SUCH A PERSONAL TONE ONE IS ALMOST TRANSPORTED TO PRAIRIE AVENUE WITH HIM:

CAMILO JOSE VERGARA

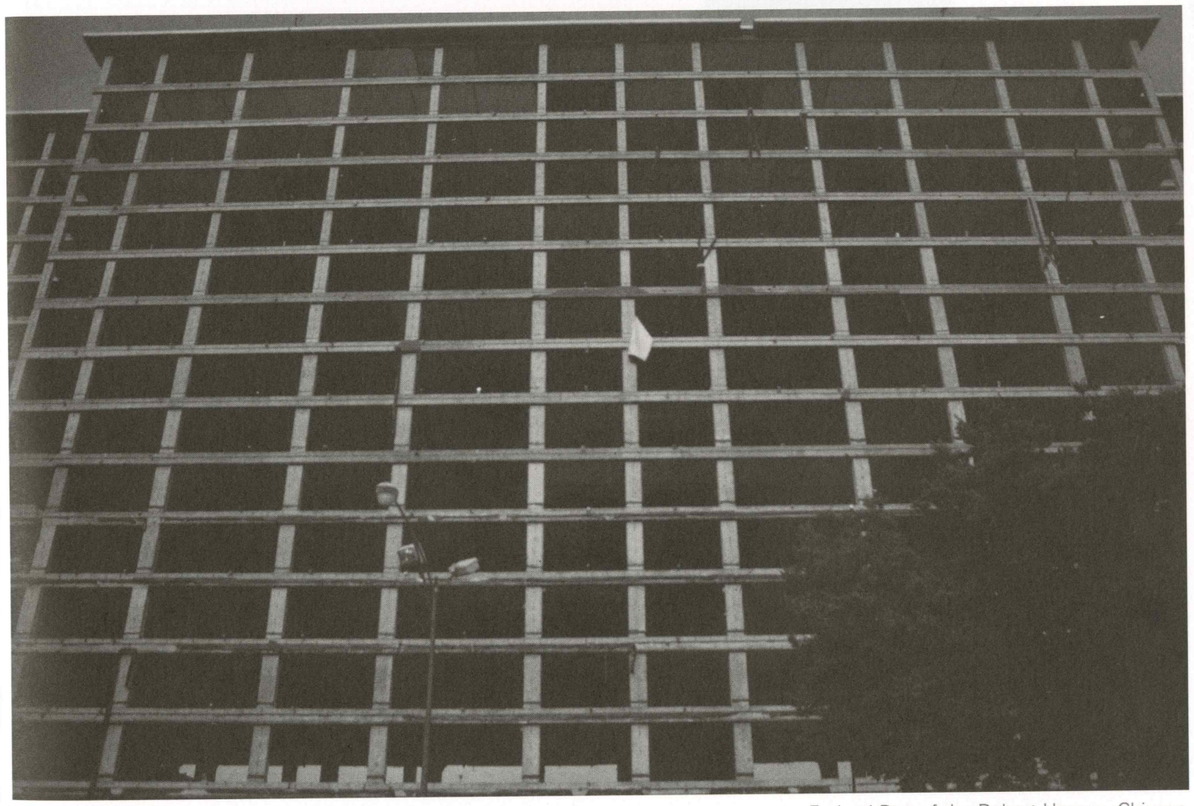
On the way to the roof I passed through a dark penthouse where large, outmoded elevator machinery sparked and sizzled as it was turned on and off. The ceiling leaked and hot water dripped from pipes. The room resembled a setting for a horror film; yet it felt surprisingly warm and comfortable compared to the exposed roof that lay behind a metal door.

Outside the penthouse, the roof was clear of ice and seemed safe except for the wind that pushed from all directions. Around me lay an extraordinary landscape of contrasting wealth and poverty: surviving gray stone Victorian mansions, snow-covered empty lots, black glass downtown towers with [on of] the world's tallest building[s] among them, the Gold Coast, public housing projects. Only the hissing of the wind and the creaking of the elevated trains as they curved on their way to and from downtown broke the silence. An immense, freezing Lake Michigan lay to the east.

Still, though his words show the cold, harsh bareness of the landscape in so many public housing projects, Vergara's view of these places is far from hopeless and his photographs are often strangely beautiful, revealing the humanity that continues to exist here despite the government's apparent indifference. Vergara's images reveal the pride and marvel that must have accompanied the construction and initial completion of these now tired and worn monumental structures. While Vergara's views and feelings concerning the policies and theories that guided the formation of these modern-day slums is far from invisible, he – playing more the role of a strict historian – resists making sweeping generalizations and refrains from offering his advice by deflecting probing questions of this nature to others he considers more worthy of an expert opinion. However, after so many years dedicated to the up-close and in-depth study of public housing, the insight that he does offer is hard to ignore. In *The New American Ghetto* he writes about New York City's preferred method of dealing with the dismal state that many of the older projects-demolition and eventual replacement with low-rise units:

In New York City, where space is at a premium, covering large tracts with low-density townhouses constitutes an inefficient use of valuable public land and infrastructure. And by excluding the poor, these developments force the city to concentrate the most destitute population elsewhere-typically in institutions or in badly maintained buildings located in the most violent ghettos. In addition, townhouse enclaves set up barriers to defend themselves against their neighbors, resulting in the further fragmentation of the communities.

Vergara's reluctance to hold the activist torch while remaining firmly entrenched in the midst of the highly politicized arena of public housing has allowed him to produce some of the most important American photographic work on this topic to date. While such thorough documentation of America's often seedy underbelly deserves to be federally funded, Vergara has remained an independent producer of his various projects. While this has certainly led to hardships for the author, it has allowed him to produce truly touching and telling stories of the lives of those people relegated to the outskirts of American society. But perhaps more unusual, unique, and in the end, valuable to the study of public housing, Vergara has revealed the marginalized lives of the buildings that serve as homes to those on the outside looking in – a modern-day Jacob Riis – whose contributions may provide clues to a better future for the much-maligned necessity and legitimacy of public housing.



Federal Part of the Robert Homes, Chicago

BLOWING INTO BUBBLES text by Beverly Choe-Harris

Geography of a Bust.

Bubbles: small globules, typically hollow and light;
things that lack firmness, solidity or reality.

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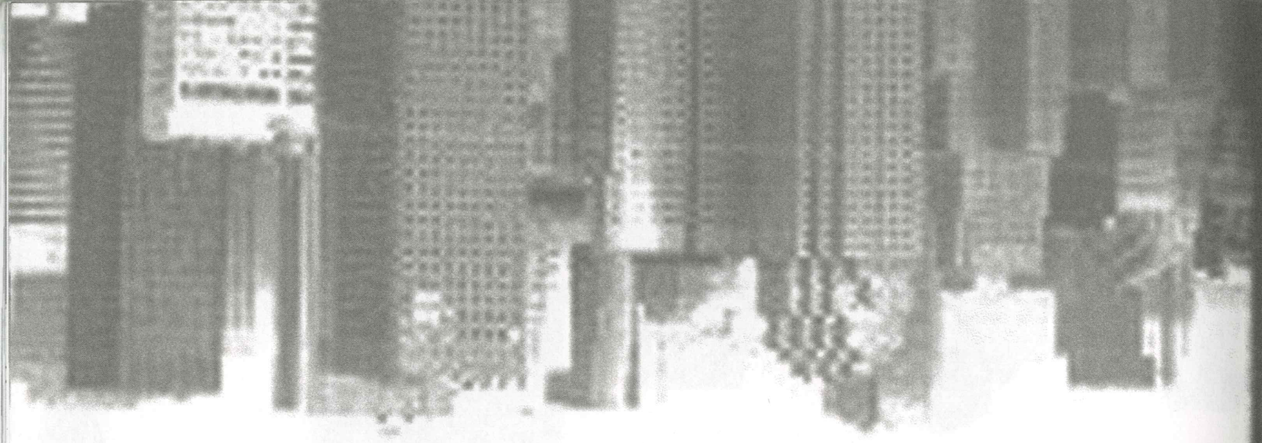


Ambling through San Francisco recently, this definition of bubbles surfaced as I surveyed the jagged post-boom landscape. Ecstatic office development led this city's building euphoria during the height of the dot-com era. Yet this surge came to an abrupt halt alongside the disappearance of the Webvans and Kozmo messengers. In the aftermath of the bubble's burst, many developers suspended their projects as news of rising commercial vacancy rates were released. Within the course of a year and a half, office vacancy rates in San Francisco plummeted from one percent to forty-nine percent. These conditions wrinkled the urban terrain in the form of fissures, shells, and bubbles, revealing the geography of a bust. Empty office building shells stand still while tattered remnants of building paper flap in the wind, telling the story about a new economic and development culture.

One of the remarkable contradictions emerging from all this activity is the disjunction between the housing and commercial office markets. While the office market melts, the housing market remains stable. Many "refugees" from the computer industry are leaving town (so many that it is difficult to reserve a U-Haul these days), but the majority of people are still here and exert the same need for shelter that existed during the boom. Why are there so many empty shells and bubbles, when a simultaneous demand for housing exists?

The reason is that zoning restrictions conventionally separate residential from commercial uses. The master plan diagrams initially developed for the city cannot keep pace with the volatile building markets or the developers who act quickly on those market demands. This delay leads to an uneven pattern of development as can be seen now, the ultimate result being a wasteful use of urban space. This new situation calls for a new approach to zoning, one which increases the availability of low and middle income housing in particular.

HOUSING AND EMPOWERMENT

Economic mixture is a phenomenon which gives cities their juice, their life. However, an equal mixture of class and economies was threatened in the post-Fordist city. The resultant "dual city", as explained by Manuel Castells in his book *The Rise of the Network Society*, produced polarizing spatial patterns that were characterized specifically by the absence of the majority of the middle tiers of society. This middle was largely replaced by a diptych: white-collar professionals and service-oriented laborers, increasing both tension and separation within the city.

Housing is one of the urban tools that can build power and presence for the lower and middle classes. Home ownership has now been folded into ideas of empowerment and legitimacy, and this is important when discussing urban territories. Encouraged by government-subsidized mortgage programs, home ownership has been a vehicle for economic mobility since World War II, and there is no reason to think that this trend will stop. Home values have risen steadily since the post-war boom, when federal policies increased home production and ownership in America.

RETHINKING THE BUBBLE

Overdevelopment is inevitable in the quickening boom-bust cycles of the market. The erratic market produces a lumpy urban landscape, and new strategies must be forged to deal with these changing conditions. By seeing shells and bubbles as a byproduct of this new economic rhythm, housing advocates and planners should also see an opportunity to increase housing and mixture in the city. This approach of appropriation will improve the urban landscape and increase mixture amongst its population. Blowing into bubbles does not signify surrendering to a market; on the contrary, it capitalizes on the excesses created by a hyper-marketplace.

Without regret, the bubbles and shells should be seen as a way to create housing in a city where the housing market didn't soften like the office market. These abandoned developments have created a surge of pre-housing bubbles which can be an asset to housing advocates/developers. Their abandonment should not mark the death of a building, but it should be seen as an opportunity to realign urban development with the demand for low and middle income housing. At their most basic, bubbles and shells supply a type of urban infrastructure which can be converted to housing. This would lead to a more fluid and progressive use of the city, one tailored to today's marketplace.

NEW URBAN PARADIGM

Adaptive reuse is a common urban practice: loft living came from artists converting warehouses into housing. There are new, generative opportunities in formation now. The concrete column grids visible South of Market represent the bones to future housing developments. This vision is applicable not only to office spaces, but live-work lofts as well. By changing the packaging of the shell, a more appropriate use can be made. A model of this reaction to a market can been seen in the San Francisco restaurant scene in the past couple of years: several high-end restaurants opened, closed during the bust, and have subsequently reopened with humbler menus and humbler prices. One recently opened under the name "Home."

The realization of this strategy within the housing market would depend on enlightened zoning strategies and market-savvy housing advocates. I recently had the opportunity to witness a grant proposal before the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency in which a non-profit housing developer purchased a partially complete project from a developer at a fire sale price. They received the grant to convert originally high end units into low-income housing. The resourceful housing agency saw the value of the bubble and shaped it into housing. However, in this example, zoning was not a challenge. The next step would be to apply the same approach in converting commercially-zoned shells to housing.

We live in an urban climate in which flux is the operative paradigm. The current spatial contradiction between empty offices and full houses embodies a sludgy mixture of dissolved hopes, crusty zoning regulations, and the hot and sour laws of supply and demand. The built presence of these shells and bubbles should be a wake-up call for housing advocates. These bubbles are waiting to become part of the urban flow, and it can be executed in a way which realigns development with the basic need for low and middle income housing.

HOME HOUSE PROJECT

SOUTHEASTERN CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY ART, WINSTON SALEM, NC + DWELL

Type: Open/Invitational
Registration Deadline: 02.01.03
Submission Deadline: 03.01.03

Open to: US Artists, Architects, Designers, Colleges and Universities
Entry Fee: none

Awards: US $15,000. in awards plus publication in catalogue

Jury: Michael Sorkin, Ben Nicholson, Steve Badanes, and community representatives

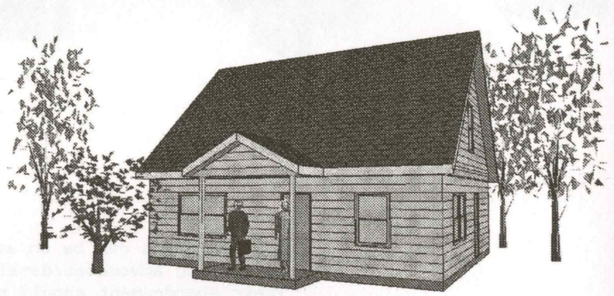
Exhibition Dates: 05.09 - 07.06.03 at SECCA. Other venues tba.
Publication: Catalogue with essays by Michael Sorkin, Ben Nicholson, and others, and images of the selected proposals.

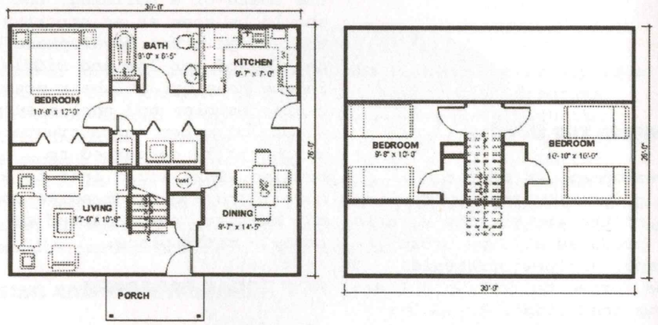
The Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art (SECCA) and DWELL MAGAZINE announce a two-part project that addresses the future of affordable housing. The first component, the HOME House Project Design Invitational, will showcase innovative design solutions for affordable housing/living shelter by artists, architects, and designers from the United States. The proposed designs will use the existing plans and pricing for typical three- and four-bedroom housing structures implemented by Habitat for Humanity as a point of departure and as a way to actively engage low and moderate income families and communities, as well as cultural, humanitarian, and perhaps, commercial organizations in the benefits of qualtiy design and workmanship.

In the second phase of the project, a series of housing structures will be constructed based on Invitational designs and in concert with families and communities in need at specific sites throughout North Carolina and other areas of the United States as well. During the building phase, open dialogue, collaboration of individuals, agencies and organizations, adaptation to site, local building codes adherence, and community input will be essential for the projects to be completed.

Habitat for Humanity's mission to provide "simple, decent, affordable" single family housing for low income families is to be commended, yet one of the criticisms often voiced is the organization's reliance on very basic, standard buildings. SECCA will present the Invitational as the first stage in addressing this criticism by providing residents of lowand moderate income housing with inspired living space usually reserved for the more affluent. Our overall aim is to establish a new national housing model in terms of design, energy efficiency, environmental consciousness, sustainability, and cost effectiveness that will be used throughout the state of North Carolina and perhaps the rest of the country. One of the specific goals of the project is to provide creative design in the affordable housing market for those who need it most, that is, the ones who can't afford it.

"One of the key questions that I kept asking myself", said David J. Brown, SECCA's senior curator who conceived the project, "Is it possible for organizations like Habitat for Humanity, the Enterprise Foundation, and even the manufactured housing industry to build smart, sustainable, green-directed, quality-designed, affordable housing? According to the zeitgeist that has filled the air with programs like Auburn Univeristy's Rural Studio, the University of Kansas' Studio 804, numerous national and international conferences, books, too many magazine articles to begin to name, the answer is a qualitative Y-E-S!" Another important question that Brown asks is directed to the impediments that lower and moderate income communities face, "Is it possible that quantiy design in housing has the ability to positively affect inividuals and communities who historically have been omitted from living in such forms?"





The HOME House Project Design Invitational exhibition premieres at SECCA (May 9 - July 7, 2003). The exhibition will be available to travel nationally beginning August 1, 2003 for a two year period. The timeline for building the houses will vary depending upon planing, funding and geography.

The deadline for design submissions is March 1, 2003. In early May, the jury (consisting of Michael Sorkin, Ben Nicholson, Steve Badanes, and Community representatives) will select ten works of exceptional merit and use their descretion in awarding the prizes. The finalists will be announced during the exhibition opening reception on Friday, May 8, 2003. All submitted proposals will be included in the exhibition. A catalogue will be published in conjunction with the exhibition with essays by Sorkin, Nicholson, and others. The ten finalists will have their proposals included in the publication.

Essential HOME House Design Elements:
- adherence to/divergence from Habitat for Humanity house plans
- cost effectiveness
- sustainable materials and construction methods
- green/environmentally-conscious materials, methods, and practice
- innovation in materials, methodology, technology, and design.
- accessibility and functionality

The late visionary architect Samuel Mockbee, who founded the remarkable Rural Studio architecture program for Auburn University, once remarked, "Houses are the great paramour for architects, from the most successful all the way down to the most struggling. We draw them on the backs of napkins. But too often when I look at what builders and developers are doing, we're not talking about architecture any longer. We're talking about capitalism at its most obscene. The public has bought into the mediocrity and insipid attitude of manufactured and spec houses, and has given up any hope of creating homes with spirit." The HOME House Project Design Invitational and the HOME House Project take their cue from the wisdom of Mockbee's words.

For more information or to register, contact:
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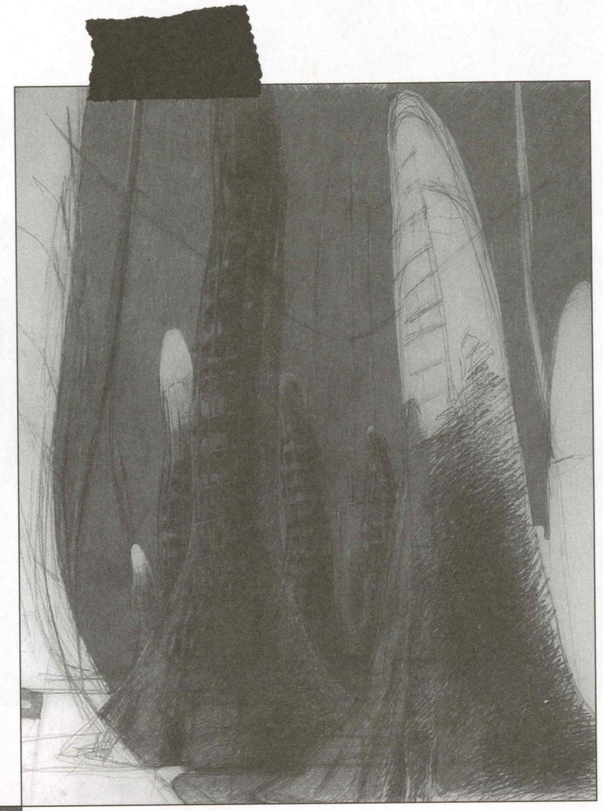
SUB:LINE

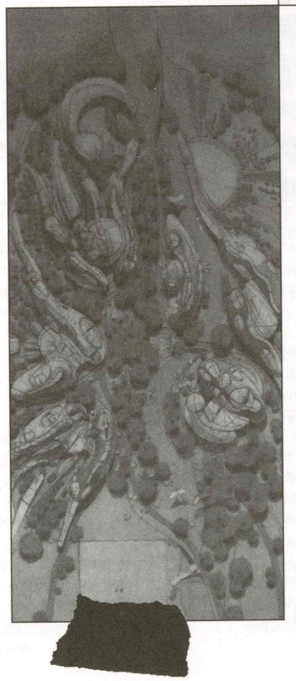
reviewed by Bonnie Leung

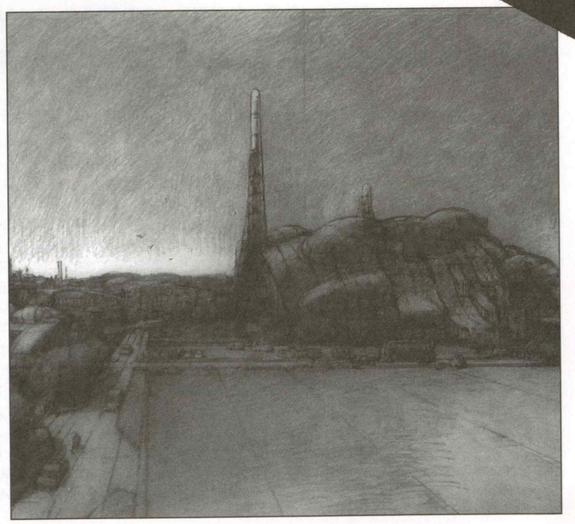
Current architectural circles tend to divide into two camps over the use of technology in architectural design. Some argue that new technological developments have freed the architect from previous constraints in the creative process and that the new tools ultimately improve architecture. The opposing faction believes that the age-old tradition of drawing is an integral part of the creative process and is key to the marriage of instrumentality (*techne*) and representation (*poiesis*). This group views the trend of CAD programs replacing traditional hand drawings as a loss to the discipline. In order to capture and demonstrate the poetic gesture inherent in the craft of hand drawings, an exhibition at Architecture Design Build (A:D/B) Project Space in Brooklyn, *sub:line*, presents a collection of drawings by eleven architects. Although the works are diverse, each piece explores spatial possibilities through a hand-crafted approach to architectural representation.

In choosing pieces for exhibit, curator Effie Patelos stretches the definition of "hand drawing" to include any sort of work whose creation involved the act of drafting. The result is an eclectic mix that demonstrates the multitudinous potential in architectural representation. Petra Kempf's interactive cartography box allows visitors to slide overlaying maps to create a city blueprint. Andre Vovk's large-scale paintings of amorphous buildings evoke a fantasy landscape that tickles the imagination. Alicia Imperiale's photographic grid teases the eye by super imposing perspectival and Cartesian planes. Other participating artists include Maria Berman, Victoria Marshall, Michael Webb and Lebbeus Woods.

The works in *sub:line* are removed from the physical manifestation of architecture. Most are not representational of actual buildings; none are traditional orthographic or axonometric diagrams. The exhibition consciously blurs the line between art and architecture blurs. Even the press release reads: "*sub:line* is an attempt to present works whose beauty and expression realize drafting and rendering as a valid art form." Are these artistic manifestations of the architectural process or stand-alone pieces of art? The answer lies in how you definition of architecture. Patelos contends that any spatial exploration is an act of architecture. Thus, the physical drawings, evidence of the mind's creative process, are not documents of architecture, but are architecture themselves.







all three pieces are by Andrei Vovk
clockwise from top:
Vision #1, Governor's Island, 1998,
Sendai Incinerator, 2000,
Master Plan, Future House, 1999

LOST IN CHINATOWN

BY MIMI ZEIGER

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE CURRENCY OF THE LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY AND NOW THE BURGEONING TWENTY-FIRST, THE "REAL" TELESCOPES BACK IN ON ITSELF? WHEN THE ALL THE OSBORNES AND SURVIVORS AND ANNA NICOLE SMITHS LOSE THE SARDONIC SMIRK AND IMPLODE IN A MORBID FEEDBACK LOOP?

This is what I wonder as I wander in and out of galleries, plastic glass in hand (half-full with cheap Chardonnay) on Chung King Road, Chinatown. A pleasant art-filled Saturday evening in Downtown Los Angeles; just me and a hundred grungy socialites.

At least, this is what I wish I was wondering. It's what comes to mind now that the sweetly sour taste has faded some months after the fact. What was really on my mind was "Why is their hair so greasy and messy, yet so artfully arranged?" But now I've given up taking pot shots at the jaded, Fred Segal shoppers and it's time to reflect. I'm disturbed by the ease with which these tableaus nest. One ironic reality fits snug inside another, and another and another *ad infinitum*, as if you are staring at your image in the funhouse mirrors of the Prada men's shoe department. (Location: Prada Store, New York City, Rem Koolhaas/OMA; in the basement behind Kazuyo Sejima's packaging installation.)

Chinatown is a place with multiple historic layers dating back a century. For Los Angeles, it is simply ancient. Also, it proves to be the perfect case study to illustrates my line of questioning. One earnestly ironical "real" moment in time tucked within another.

With a nod to the Eames film, *Powers of Ten*, there's an equation to graft the exponential growth or decay curve (the warped space, the geographic projections) of these realities. First establish the variables. C equals Chinatown, our case study. "Real" equals a wry, disposition in which the everyday is worn as a sarcastic badge of honor.

$C=C_o\ R^x$

C= Chinatown, a function of the original Chinatown multiplied by the real, or where we are at a given time
C_o= original Chinatown
R= real
X= the exponent of reality in time

So, where does the curve end?

EQUATION 1:
$C=C_o\ R^1$

To find the end of the rainbow, we need to track the development of Old Chinatown. Located in downtown Los Angeles, Chinatown was built in the 1870s along a short alley, Calle de Los Negros, block long between El Pueblo Plaza and Old Arcadia Street. It's presumptuous to label the jumble of buildings occupied by Chinese agricultural workers, laundry men and hired hands anything but a moment in itself. An immigrant culture, plunked down in a potential Arcadia, does not build in an attempt to create an "old-world lifestyle." The decorative motifs ape what is brought from the motherland producing a life just cobbled together. The self-conscious nostalgia comes later when it becomes part of the cultural production. When we start to consume and reconsume its image.

The rise and fall of Old Chinatown as a *fin-de-siecle* tourist destination that determines the first degree on the Reality Curve. The exotic restaurants, shops full of oriental bric-a-brac and eastern temptation conspire around 1900 to lure thrill-seeking white Anglenos. Opium dens, perhaps real, perhaps a fabrication set up for American *chiniose* visions, marks the crest between the apex and nadir of Chinatown. Questioning whether the scene in front of you is actual or forged anticipates demise and locks in cynicism. When the guise of authenticity slipped from the shop windows and onto the unpaved streets of Old Chinatown, what had seemed alluring to Western eyes was now seedy and corrupt. By 1910 the area was abandoned by all but immigrants and considered worthless. In 1913, property was sold for development to Southern Pacific trackways. In 1931, the California Supreme Court approved the construction of Union Station on the site of Old Chinatown.

EQUATION 2:
$C=C_o\ R^2$

So here we stand in the second creation of Chinatown. New Chinatown, 1938. One part pagoda, one part Portland cement. Reality is squared.

New Chinatown didn't rise phoenix-like from the ashes of its own demise. It wallowed for years as one developer's speculation after another failed to light a flame. Two years passed after the Supreme Court authorized Old Chinatown as the site of the new Union Station before the thought of a new "Old Chinatown" was bandied about.

But why a New Chinatown as such? Couldn't the Chinese community just settle into the great American melting pot like the rest? The reasons for autonomy are as much about economics as about heritage. Built into the architecture is an appeal to the American tourist. "The buildings would be most modern and airy, correctly engineered for earthquake, fire safety, and sanitation. The streets would be wide for an open, safe look. Thus the area would be palatable to the casual American tourist as well as fellow Chinese. The new community would eliminate potential houses of vice, such as gambling," write Suellen Cheng and Munson Kwok in the *Los Angeles Chinatown Fiftieth Year Guidebook*.

"Erle Webster and Adrian Wilson were the architects who worked successfully to combine the elements of Chinese designs on essentially modern buildings. Economy and a limited budget dictated that the structures be kept simple rather than exactly authentic," they continue. Is the architecture American posing Chinese or is it Chinese posing American? Simple concrete construction delineates a *hutong*, the historical city alley or lane typical in Beijing. Chinese characters announcing each store and restaurant are rimmed with neon, translated into English with matching brush strokes.

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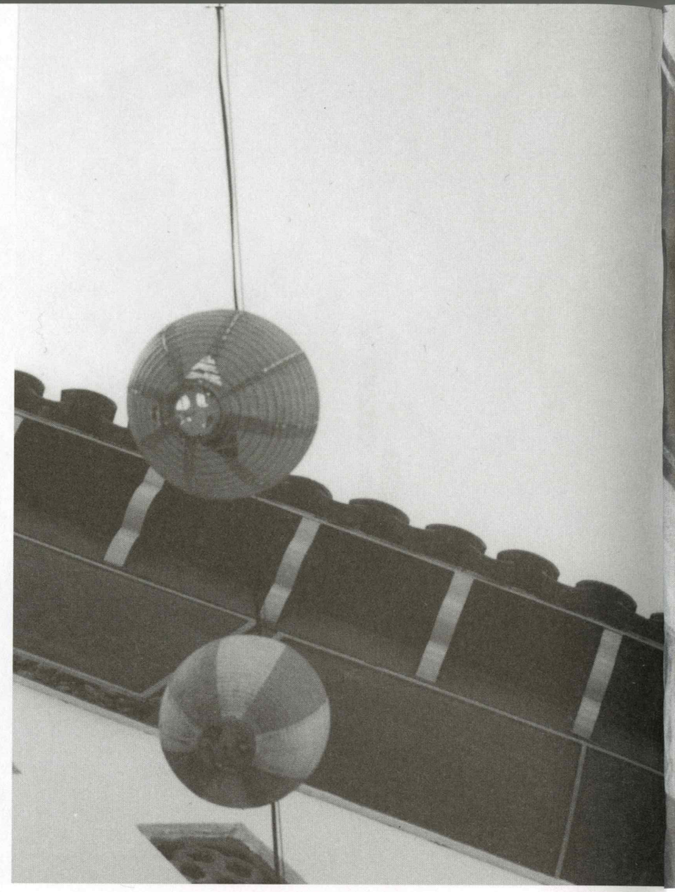

The nostalgia is not yet dripping from the eaves, but there is a celebration of otherness – of the Far East – and a celebration of California's precarious position balanced on the Western edge of the continent. It's Nathaniel West territory: a collision of dreams, forms and cultures. As he writes in *The Day of the Locust* (1939), "But not even the soft wash of dusk could help the houses. Only dynamite would be of any use against the Mexican ranch houses, Samoan huts, Mediterranean villas, Egyptian and Japanese temples, Swiss chalets, Tudor cottages, and every possible combination of these styles that lined the slopes of the canyon. ...Their desire to startle was so eager and guileless. It's hard to laugh at the need for beauty and romance, no matter how tasteless, even horrible, the results of that are. But it is easy to sigh."

With a sigh, New Chinatown is exactly what one would expect from Los Angeles: commodity, fantasy, Forbidden City storefronts and imported baubles next to the imported authenticity of oddly-perfumed herb shops and grocery stores. It's a projection of the Orient made palatable to Western eyes.

And where Old Chinatown stood? Union station. The building, designed by architects John Parkinson & Donald B. Parkinson and finished in 1939, is as much of a visionary view of the American West as Chinatown is a Western view of the East. To the degree that Chinatown is decorative and marginalized, Union Station is majestic. Rancho Supreme, mission moderne describes the vast courtyards, tile roofs and faux wood-beamed ceilings. A three-storey tall archway spills out promise across the LA Basin. It is dust bowl sublime built to accommodate the migration from Oklahoma, Arkansas, Missouri and Kansas that preceded it's construction.

EQUATION 3:
$C=C_0 R^3$

Equation 3 takes us back to quasi-real-time Chung King Road. Saturday night gallery hopping. Back to an opening sponsored by the movie Dogtown and Z Boys, drinks hosted by Absolut. Lit by strings of faded paper lanterns, the crowd is beautiful. It's a happening.

And why is it a happening? Perhaps it's because the crusty storefronts make cool justification for mediocre art and fashion? In Los Angeles, anything that gives the semblance of history has value, especially if it gives just that – a semblance. Not much is actually for sale. The art is more display than commerce - galleries set up to win cred, to win authenticity. The R cubed is the paradox between knowing one's own shallow roots are grounded in hyperreality and the need for something deeper. The depth found in or a Parisian cold water flat is coveted. So it is re-created into a New Urbanist Citywalk for hipsters.

"Unreality no longer resides in the dream or fantasy or in the beyond, but in the real's hallucinatory resemblance to itself," writes French theorist Jean Baudrillard, in his 1976 essay, "The Symbolic Exchange and Death." Following Baudrillard's thought, this Chung King Road happening and, by extension, much of Chinatown's ad hoc gentrification, is not a dreamy recreation of bohemian café society, but a parody of itself. The trust-fund galleries (and gallery owners), hawking more attitude than art, establish their "realness" by carrying over the names of now defunct establishments. Black Dragon Society, China Art Objects, Fong's the signage reads with a smirk. The clever recycling leads not to a happy-go-lucky bricolage, but to something darker.

"Reality itself flounders in, the meticulous reduplication of the real, preferably though another, reproductive medium, such as photography. From medium to medium, the real is volatilized, becoming an allegory of death. But it is also, in a sense, reinforced thought its own destruction. It becomes reality for its own sake, the fetishism of the lost object: no longer the object of representation, but the ecstasy of denial and of its own ritual extermination: the hyperreal," again writes Baudrillard. Hence, retail architecture is the medum of reduplication. This changes how to read the Chinese shopkeepers pulling down the rolling metal shutters over the display windows at dusk and scurrying past the arriving jet set. Perhaps it's not because of a lack of business acumen that they abandon their territory, but because they catch a whiff of the smell of death and are fleeing ghosts.

EQUATION 4:
$C=C_0 R^4$

The chatter and drum-and-bass co-mingle and it seems that all the equations, variables and integers map out a grim path towards destruction – reality implodes, one layer of visibility pancaking on top of another like the dual towers at the tip of Manhattan. Does all matter turn to toxic pixie dust?

Searching for the art space, C-Level, it looks like Baudrillard's prophecy is true. Sketchy directions taken from their website take me down an alley just behind Chung Kind Road. Chinese restaurants that face Hill Street also share the alley. Their engorged dumpsters aren't quaint, although the stink is damn authentic.

C-Level is about ten yards down the alley, identified by a left-hand stoop with an open red door. Steps lead down to the basement. This is the space; it's under Chung King Road, a literal representation of the "underground."

Although I brace myself for more of the aboveground underground attitude, what I find is a hodgepodge computer equipment and threadbare couches. A couple members of the cooperative are playing video games and another is programming something. The seven members (Christina Ulke, Cyril Kuhn, Eddo Stern, Jason Brown, Mark Allen, Michael Wilson and Peter Brinson) are self-proclaimed on www.c-level.cc to be "artists, programmers, writers, designers, agit-propers, filmmakers and reverse-engineers." The space is a studio and lab for virtual explorations.

It's here, where subterranean rompus room meets high tech, that Baudrillard's endless reproduction comes back into play and, in turn, is questioned. He writes, "Thus art entered the phase of its own indefinite reproduction; everything that redoubles in itself, even ordinary, everyday reality, falls in the same stroke under the sign of art, and becomes aesthetic. The same goes for production, of which one can say that today it is commencing this aesthetic doubling at the point where, having expelled all content and finality, it becomes, in a way, abstract and nonfigurative. It begins to express the pure form of production; it takes itself, like art, as its own teleological value."

While the work could fall under the above definition, an understanding of what constitutes the "art" is slippery. C-level is more about creating a social network through lectures, screenings and performances than about autonomous art production. Events are produced, and cynicism aside, there is hope here in the basement gloom. A community of sorts is formed around production without the added "real" aesthetic.

Communal art projects tend manifest in interactive events. For example, the following Cockfight Arena and Tekken Torture Tournament happenings are described with all the gusto of a World Wresting Federation referee:

"A one-night parade of sweat and adrenaline pitting viewer against viewer in brutal virtual cockfighting theatre. Audience volunteers will don custom-made game controllers with full sized wings and feathered helmets. Combatants will step into an arena to control their life size game avatars through vigorous flapping and pecking, competing for blood and birdfeed while rapaciously inflicting onscreen bodily harm. Cockfight Arena is free and open to the public. Gambling and smoking will be permitted. No animals or humans were injured in the production of this event.

"Tekken Torture Tournament is a one-night event combining the latest video game technology, untapped public aggression and painful electric shock. Willing participants are wired into a custom fighting system - a modified Playstation (running Tekken III) which converts virtual on screen damage into bracing, non-lethal, electric shocks."

Eddo notes that the "lack of slickness is deliberate." There's an odd logic to their oppositional stance against the gentrified art scene going on above them: it actually helps them to create community. Peter, from his musty couch, raises his voice if not his fist i n solidarity. "Decide what kind of culture you are interested in and then manufacture it. We don't need those galleries to validate what we do."

So, it is where you least expect to find reality – in a virtual reality, net art, digital space – the most hyperreal places on the planet, that the Real is able to re-emerge from the staticy feedback. C-level authenticates the unreal. Production, in this case the production of community alongside the technological, is not subsumed by its own self-consciousness. Instead, it sidesteps notions of authenticity. The work may not look great. It may not be slick or pretty. It shows each pixel, every puppet string of production. The "shock of the real" is real and the sarcasm is left in the alley. The shocks dealt in the Tekken Torture Tournament underscore that the goal is to reiterate life, rather than wallow in Baudrillard's fascination with decay.

images: Colorado Court, Santa Monica Pugh + Scarpa Architects

GGGANGGANGREEN

by Jennifer Doublet

IF Cameron Diaz & Leonardo di Caprio both drive environmentally conscious cars – those super-efficient rides that combine a gas engine with an electric motor, does this mean that pop culture is ready for green to go mainstream?

How to Build Green without Going into the Red was the title and subject of a workshop on sustainable affordable housing held May 2002 in Santa Monica. Lining up to take a stab at how to D.I.Y. green, the symposium was sponsored by two local non-profit organizations dedicated to the development of economically and environmentally sound affordable housing: Southern California Association of Non-Profit Housing (SCANPH) and Livable Places. A development and architecture heavy audience participated in the event. The agenda was straightforward, consisting of two case study presentations by the project developers, followed by a tour of one project and additional comments by one of the architects and an energy consultant. All the speakers focused on "lessons-learned" in order to outline the challenges and rewards of building sustainable architecture. The idea was to leave prospective green professionals with some hard numbers, direct contacts and a game plan for pursuing sustainable building projects.

Two case studies lay out strategies for building green housing: the Village Green presented by developer Jeff Lee of the Lee Group and Colorado Court presented by developer Joan Ling of the Community Corporation of Santa Monica (CCSM). The projects share many of the same technologies but their differing typologies, scales, project timelines, government affiliations and subsidies result in varying expressions for their green measures.Made up of seventy-seven single-family houses located in Sylmar, North of downtown Los Angeles and was designed by Van Tilburg, Banvard & Soderbergh, AIA, Village Green is the largest photovoltaic community in Southern California and was the first national Partnership for Advanced Technology in Housing (PATH) pilot site. Colorado Court, designed by Pugh + Scarpa Architecture, is a forty-four unit sustainable demonstration project for the City of Santa Monica and the developer and architect hope to gain a gold star Leadership in Energy Efficient Design (LEED) rating for energy efficient design.

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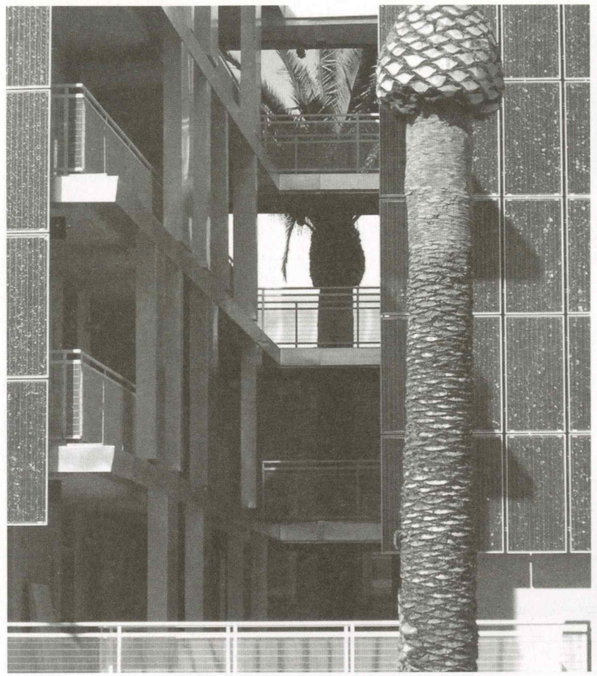
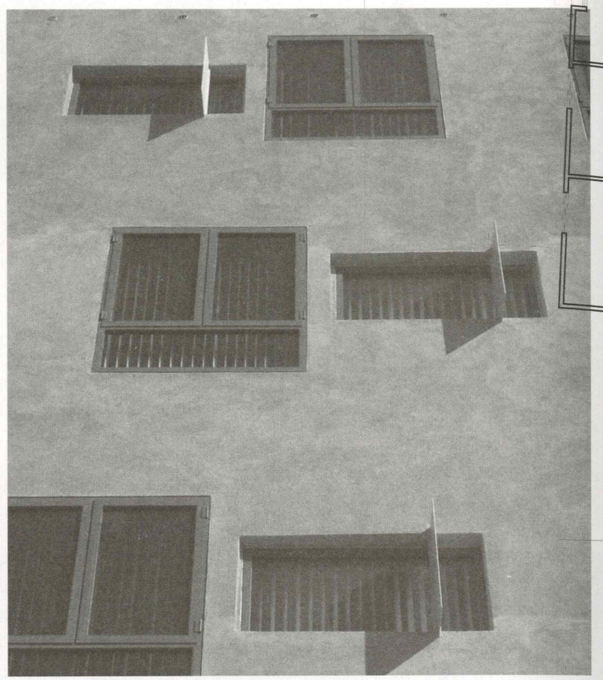
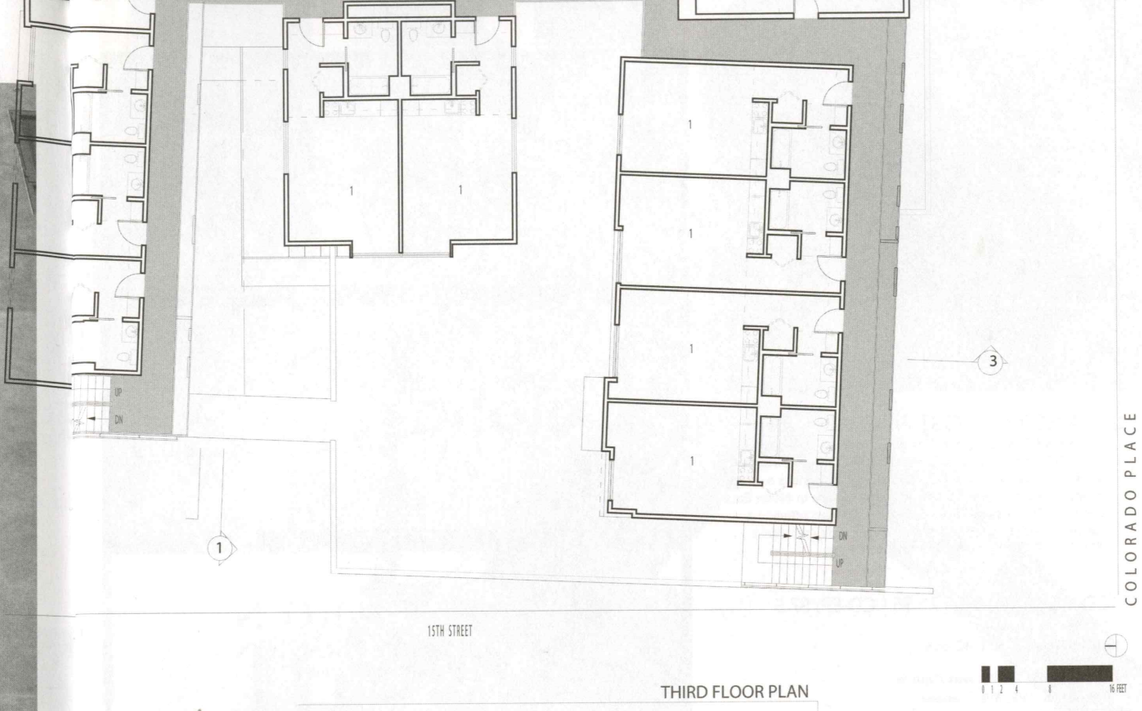






THIRD FLOOR PLAN

A sustainable retrofit of a traditional affordable suburban housing development, the Village Green integrates green measures as with the standard tastes of suburban home-buyers. Ultimately, the design goal is that the sustainable measures blend seamlessly with standard home design package. By contrast, sustainability was integral component to the design and coordination process of Colorado Court. Further, as a highly visible demonstration project, the architects were able to incorporate the green measures with a great deal of innovation. For instance, running the photovoltaic panels vertically on the exterior stairwells at the front facade is as strong a design statement as it is green. This billboard bravado challenges existing expectations and preconceived notions of sustainable design.

Coordinating the sustainable measures for both of these projects also required a new layer of consultants and in the case of Colorado Court, a new set of specifications. The Village Green looked to Building Sciences Corporation which recommended their six main energy conservation and production measures of Advanced Framing, Cellulose Insulation, Gas Chilled Air Conditioning, Photovoltaic Cells, Low-E Glass, and Energy Star Refrigerators. After rebates and subsidies the net cost to the developer totaled $16,100/unit that translated to $93.87/mo additional mortgage increase to buyers. However due to affordability lending agreements the developer was not able to raise the home prices to cover the green expenses. Colorado Court worked with a private energy consultant, Helios International, Inc. that helped them to research and receive a range of grants, rebates and subsidies that covered the $500,000 or ten percent budget increase for the main green measures including the photovoltaic panels and the gas powered micro-turbine co-generation system.

As the workshop wrapped up, it seemed that while sustainability is clearly the future, it is not yet economically feasible for production housing development. As energy efficient measures and products become mainstream and cost effective (such as high efficiency glazing and cellulose insulation) their applications will widen. Angie Brooks, Colorado Court project architect for Pugh + Scarpa, suggests that there were endless innovations to be made through dogged product and subsidy research and development. Sustainability is conceptually integral to the design practice.

After the workshop, in several individual interviews I asked the architects and developers involved in the symposium a few more question regarding issues regarding sustainable design. Jay Stark of the Lee Group, Joan Ling of the Community Corporation of Santa Monica, Larry Scarpa and Angie Brooks of Pugh + Scarpa and Sasha Tarnapoloski of Dry Design the landscape architect for Colorado Court, took the time to answer my queries.

Jennifer Doublet: WHAT IS THE NUMBER AND SCALE OF SUSTAINABLE PROJECTS BY YOUR FIRM? AND IS SUSTAINABILITY A MANDATE FOR THE WORK YOU DO?

Joan Ling: Colorado Court is first comprehensive green project for CCSM. We are now working on a lot of retrofit measures for our existing projects. We are interested in providing examples that set high standards for environmentally sustainable housing.

Angie Brooks: Colorado Court is the largest project for Pugh + Scarpa. The first project was a small electrical vehicle charging station for the city of Santa Monica done in collaboration with Tony Loui six years ago. Currently our single family home the Solar Umbrella House is in the city for plan check and the Euclid Solar duplex in the drawing stage. We do not distinguish formal design issues with sustainability. Passive elements are always incorporated in all our designs and we are continually educating ourselves and our clients on energy rebates, materials and programs.

Larry Scarpa: Sustainability is a new paradigm for Architecture. It is an integral tool in our design process and is never a paste-on element.

Sasha Tarnapoloski: Sustainability a core and integral to all the design at Dry Design. We're interested in a symbiotic and circular relationship for people and buildings in the landscape.

JD: WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST INCENTIVES, OBSTACLES TO or HARDEST LESSONS LEARNED IN SUSTAINABLE DESIGN?

AB: The hardest lesson was changing people's perceptions in the design process and dealing with the utility infrastructure. For example the engineers were not readily sizing and scaling down their systems to adjust for the new conditions. We had a lot of meetings that included our energy consultant explaining the exact conditions and precise calculations. More often than not we met in the middle between the engineers and the energy consultant. Contractors also did not have experience or fluency with a lot of the sustainable elements. As well we ran into complications at the sub-contracting level when for instance there were only three companies experienced with blown-in insulation. One was too busy, one wouldn't work in Santa Monica and the other wouldn't do walls.

JS: In general the biggest incentive for sustainability in production housing development is expedited processing with the city, reduced fees with the city and subsidies for technology. The particular incentive for Village Green was the participation in the PATH pilot program. The biggest disincentive is the additional cost. The life cycle for these costs does not pay back to the developer in "For Sale" properties. Sustainable systems could be offered as options but most production housing is built before the buyer gets on the scene.

JD: WHAT ROLE DOES DESIGN PLAY IN HIGHLIGHTING THE TECHNOLOGIES?

JL: I think that passive design features should always be incorporated into any project. I think that the active design features at Colorado Court were chosen because of the project's high profile and location. But the active design features are not necessary in every case. The most important thing is for the design and project expression to be contextual.

LS: The passive design elements are the single most important element in any sustainable design initiative. They are free and they have the biggest impact on the overall energy issues for a project. In terms of the active elements we have just begun to scratch the surface. We are climbing the ladder one step at a time and there is a lot more innovation and invention potential in this area.

JS: The idea for our project was to make the home designs seamless with the efficiencies. People don't want to see technology in their homes. Sustainability is not really a selling point. At the Village Green affordability was the key issue and the energy saving were a bonus.

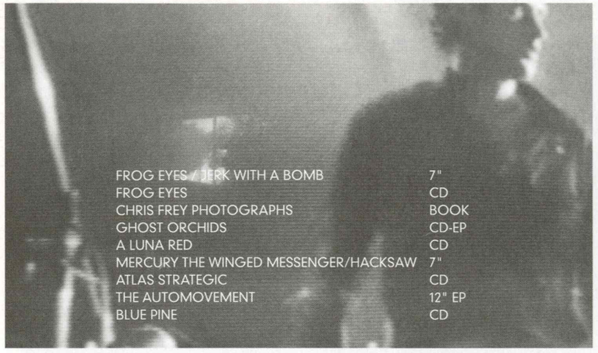
JD: WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE ASPECT OF YOUR PROJECT:

JL: That it's built! The greatest feeling is seeing the people move in and seeing how impressed they are with their new homes.

AB: Everyone loves the building. I think it's beautiful without even considering its nintey percent energy efficiencies. People who live there love it and have a home where they can live with dignity.

LS: I love the edge of blending Affordable Housing with the Hi-Tech Solar Cell Innovations. The project overcomes the "cheap building" standards associated with affordable housing and achieves a kind of wonder and amazement that few of us get to experience in our everyday lives.

JS: What interests me most about sustainability is that it is the future and it is the right thing to do. I look forward to the day when this technology really becomes "Plug-in and Play" so that we can get in place more effectively.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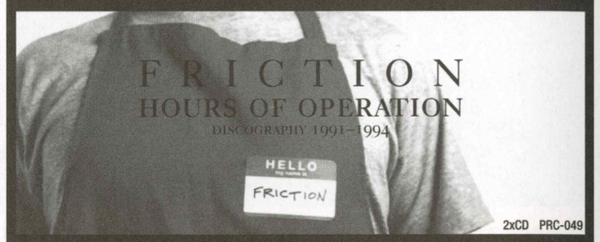

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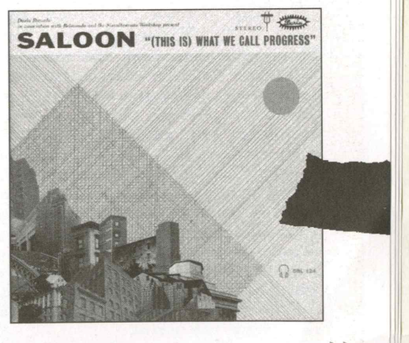

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TAKESHI MUTO

Expect More from a Past Life

Schematic Records

One half of Phoenecia and co-founder of Schematic Records, Takeshi Muto (AKA Romulo Del Castillo) leads the Miami-based assault on experimental electronic music. *Expect More From A Past Life* is a conceptual look at the microscopic worlds that exist in the space between two grains of sand. Fusing elements of electronica with ambient and hip-hop substructures, Muto fills the space to its dimensions with percolating soundbytes, fluttering breaks and dissolving waves of sound without it ever becoming muddy or oversaturated. Track 1, "Phase Inv.," establishes Muto's cohesive style. Sucked into a landscape filled with tiny mechanisms, the listener microscopically gazes as they coalesce and dissolve, devoid of any recognizable form.

Like an unstable particle placed in a stable environment, the first beats flow with a crisp and steady attack, colliding with atoms and boundaries, amidst the hissing undercurrent of radioactive decay. As the impacts advance, they mutate and the steady state of flux falls out of rhythm. The percussion slowly distorts. Warped beats and sizzling textures change as subtly as the movement of a plant or the shifting of stars. A snare pulse begins, gathering momentum from the collapsed gases of a distant past and grows within the disarray. The sound of deep bass hits and distorted sequences propel spherical matter into orbit until they are crushed under such strain, giving off an effervescence of sound throughout the mix.

Is it the beginning of a cosmos or a shift in ionic bonds? The listener is left to decide, and yet all the while, a sense of singularity is established over a chaotic occurrence. Throughout the record, Muto rewards the faithful with digital macabre and intricately programmed progressions. The result boasts material that is able to withstand an immeasurable number of listenings, something that can be rare to this particular scene. (Sean Baca)

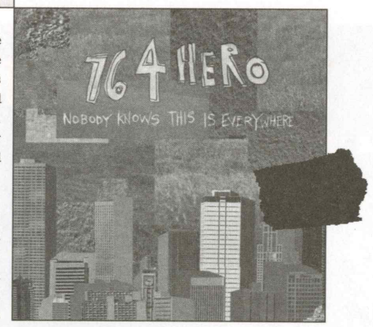
764-HERO

Nobody Knows This Is Everywhere

Tiger Style Records

If anybody remembers the time around 1995 when John Adkins and Polly Johnson formed 764-Hero and released their first recordings on Up Records, they are likely to remember that that they started out as a duo, much in the style of the Spinanes. Why go back to such olden days? Well, simply to reinforce the point that Adkins and Johnson, whose interaction extends the use of a single guitar by alternating between (and sometimes blending) rhythmic and leading parts while make the drums work as more than just a rhythmic instrument, is largely a two-person outfit. The departure of ex-Lync and Red Stars Theory bassist James Bertram after roughly three years and two records of service, and the addition of Modest Mouse touring bassist Robin P for *Nobody Knows This Is Everywhere*, just reaffirms the point.

If this is the case, then what is to be thought of the bass player? Is he superfluous, or as the medieval scholastics loved saying, nugatory? Robin Perringer seems to enter Hero at an artistic disadvantage, especially when Johnson and Adkins are both the originators and the only active veterans on the roster. This is not a question of musical ability. One listen to this record will dispel any notion that Perringer is a mediocre bass player-on time, melodic, and a more than welcome addition to the band. But he perhaps sticks to sounding a bit much like Bertram, whose style is so recognizable. It's difficult being a new arrival in an already established institution. At the beginning you quickly learn that you have to get a feel for things by following the natives



Nobody Knows This Is Everywhere is evidence that, 764-Hero are the direct descendants of the Pacific Northwest's indie-rock nobility-the above-mentioned Spinanes, Built to Spill, Modest Mouse, or anything to come out of Up or Rx Remedy Records. They completely sidestepped the God-awful grunge thing by being too young, were two steps ahead of Sunny Day Real Estate and the ensuing movement people love and hate to dub emo and have ensconced themselves in the brooding silence and obscurity generated by departure of the press and the tourists all craning their necks to bear witness to the next Seattle. After six years or so, the band gives us a record filled with the promise of whatever indie rock was meant to offer us- solid, thoughtful, and angular-without-coming-off-as-pretentious rock. The album opener, "Oceanbound," begins with a vortex of a guitar hook that pulls you into the song, and does not let you go until you've meandered through its intoxicating rhythmic and thematic changes. "You Were a Party" drips with irony, a deep and personal criticism of those who go to great lengths to be socially accepted set against the most danceable song the band has ever released. Songs such as "Answers" and "At the surface" are fantastic studies in restrained dynamism, with each song becoming progressively busier and louder. The band's command of the mid-tempo rocker is displayed frequently in "The Long Arm of the Law," "Skylines," "Satellites," "Confetti Confessional," and "Shoot a 45", where they stretch out time with a tense languor.

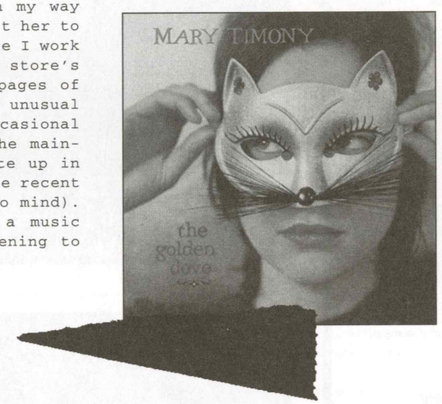
The best visual analogy for their music is expressed by the cover of their record - a collage whose background is composed of pictures of varieties of grass in shades of green, upside-down, right side up, in various angles of profile and elevation. At the bottom of the image, in front of the fragmented field of green is an aggregation of pastel-tinged images of skyscrapers. Some have their sides cut out, replaced with a plain block of color without the windows and other structural elements that we come to recognize as belonging to a building. Visually and aurally, *Nobody Knows this is Everywhere* is beautiful and unsettling; a jagged collection of fragments attempting to form a whole. (Antonio Girafez)

MARY TIMONY

The Golden Dove

Matador Records

My relationship with Mary Timony is complicated. Strictly speaking, it's not much of a relationship, really. When you witness the work of any artist, you automatically come into some kind of relationship, however loose, tight, coherent or absurd. Not to sound like a stalker, but I've followed her progress more or less since Helium's *Dirt of Luck* (Matador) came out, when I saw the band play a free in-store at No life records in Los Angeles years ago. . But like I said, the relationship is complicated. When I moved to Boston, I had no idea she would cross my path as she was jogging and I was on my way home from work. I didn't expect her to pop in to the convenience store I work at, where she would sit at the store's corner lounge and pore over pages of her poetry. Along with these unusual run-ins, I encounter the occasional piece written about her in the mainstream media (a one page write up in a 1995 *Spin Magazine* and a more recent sidebar in *Vanity Fair* come to mind). So it is as more than just a music consumer that I come to listening to and thinking about her music. When I consider Timony's work, I cannot help but consider her as a customer, an occasional interlocutor, a part of my neighborhood and media darling.



Critics are fond of citing her tendency to employ fantastical lyrical images by misusing terms such as "mystical". They are not wrong in citing her writing as possessing some type of magical realism, but when they focus exclusively on that, they miss the mark, as is apt of many writers with tastemaker ambitions. They miss her disgust and depth of imagination "Blood Tree" and her pointed and uncompromising questions. She asks in "Look a Ghost in the Eye," "Do you radiate hope, do you radiate doubt?" They craft adorably annoying lines such as, "Mary Timony makes what stoners like to call 'wizard rock.'" or describe it as "Ideal listening for the wait between *Lord of the Rings* movies..." (*Vanity Fair*, July 2002) and miss her ideals in "Musik and Charming Melodee," and her testament to music's liberating power. Such statements distract attention from the merits of her work by placing it in some lifestyle niche and then fail to ask the basic question that any decent listener must - is it a good record? The answer here is an emphatic yes. From the chord changes in "Blood Tree," to the haunting "The Owls Escape," to the lush and intoxicating "Music and Charming Melodee," to the groove-laden rhythms of "Ant's Dance," *The Golden Dove* provides ample evidence of her ability to make good music. If the listener takes her words seriously and he will find that her magical realism is more than an end in itself, but a means by which to engage the aural imagination. She even gives her listeners a pretty obvious hint when she asks in the opening cut, "Do you feel what you are thinking about?" (AG)

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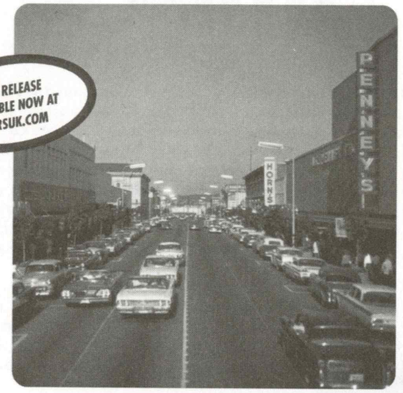

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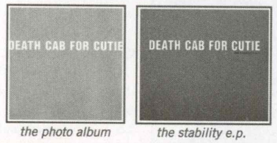

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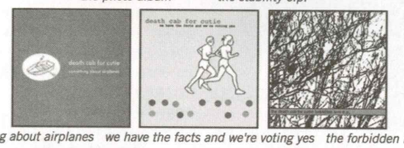
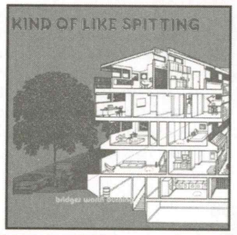


something about airplanes *we have the facts and we're voting yes* *the forbidden love e.p.*

death cab for cutie

storytelling far above the occasionally fetching but frequently fleeting indie-pop cumulus. **- The Los Angeles Times**



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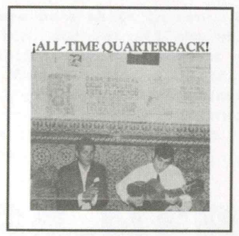

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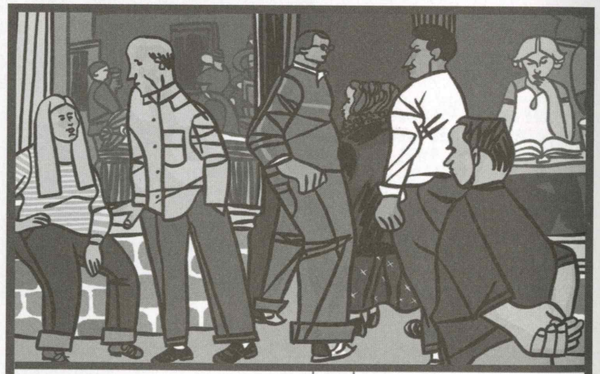

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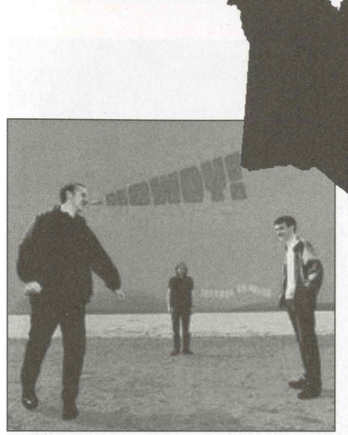

GARRISON

Be A Criminal
Revelation Records

TEENAGE FANCLUB

Howdy
Thirsty Ear Records

Blisteringly hot days like these (the heat index is at a generous 105° as I write this in my fan-ventilated room) make me question what I am doing on unemployment, when I can be sitting in an air-conditioned office performing futile tasks. Water cooler chat aside, I'll stick close to my stereo and ask myself how these two records can share page space, let alone share listening time in the same sitting? I mean, the revered Teenage Fanclub alongside these post-hardcore upstarts from Boston who call themselves Garrison? Let's be generous and examine the records-perhaps we all have a little bit to learn.

Garrison is an outfit of four young Bostonians who attempt to pull off the epic rock and roll caper with *Be a Criminal*. The album's song titles are arranged in a peculiar order: "1. Recognize an Opportunity, 2. Choose a Weapon, 3. Know the Locale, 4. Focus, Focus, Focus, 5. Commit, Commit, Commit." Perhaps you can already see where it is going. The song titles are a prescription for what is needed to pull off the underhanded deed. The record's harrowing pace, does not let up from the start. It moves along well-tread punk-rock freeways, occasionally decelerating at for big rock hooks as on "Know the Locale," the chilling "Commit, Commit," the chorus rings of an ominous conscience ringing "We Will Not Last Much Longer," and the dramatic "Cover the Tracks with Cash." Hell, there's even time to take a nervous break with the interlude, "Catch Your Breath and Have a Cigarette." These guys seem to think they know what they're dealing in, and aren't afraid to state the result in the closer, "Accept What You've Done, Accept Who You Are" - "A passed on culture less livable with all the sights but not the taste." The Garrison chaps are indeed young Turks with something to prove, if only to themselves and their constituency of bored kids who, like me, are sweltering in the heat and have nothing to do this summer, especially with an already crappy economy not letting up and when the available work is such shit. It's an ambitious project. Dangerous if taken too seriously. The danger lurks on all sides, artistically, morally and personally.

But why must they flirt with destruction at so young an age? At least that's what I hear myself thinking that's our beloved Scots, Teenage Fanclub, would have to ask about such attempts at grandeur through their album, *Howdy*. And why not listen to the group of lads who, since the mid to late eighties, have put out one pop-rock gem after another, and have pretty much seen their share of success? Teenage Fanclub offer a humble corrective to Garrison's grandiose ambitions; their humility brought on by years of cutting records, touring, and the ups and downs of success. Put next to Garrison, Teenage Fanclub are forthright, even repentant, with songs admitting of loss and uncertainty, such as "I Need Direction," a perfect piece of pop craftsmanship whose opening notes summon the spirit of Love and the Byrds, and "I Can't Find My Way Home."

Where Garrison use their punk and metal influences to lay bare the more sinister elements within us, the ecstatically inviting *Howdy*, exposes our most tender vulnerabilities Not our cruelly darker elements, but those very tender bits of humanity that seek consolation. "Dumb Dumb Dumb" is such a number. Norman Blake, Gerard Love, and Raymond McGinley swap vocal and lead duties to give the record varied voices, each bringing their own songs to the table, sometimes ecstatic "The Town and the City," other times understated "If I Never See You Again," and the wildly devotional "The Sun Shines from You." In so doing, they give us a glimpse of a tight group of friends who over a cool drink on the porch, especially in days like these, tell the young ones in Boston, "No need to be so aggressive, life is long, and it'll kick you in the ass without you trying to reach so far...Life is hard enough anyway, celebrate the little moments, happy or sad."

It's just what I need. In an age where kids and grown-ups have little to say to each other face-to-face, sometimes all we're left with are little fragments such as these to put together on ungodly hot days and parse as much meaning out of them is possible. And meaning is what we, my friends, seek in life. Correct? (AG)

FUGAZI

The Argument
Dischord Records

Why should you rush out and buy Fugazi's recently released album *The Argument*? Because, you must.

For Fugazi's fans, it is another perfect acoustical journey of wailing guitars. Ian MacKaye's barking vocals, Guy Picciotto's tortured moan and socio-political philosophizing make Fugazi one of the mainstays in the Indie-Punk scene. *The Argument* captivates both in its diverse harmonic range and vocal content. MacKaye and Picciotto sing about social issues ranging from urban gentrification on "Cashout," to the popularity of commercialized violence on "Life and Limb." Much like a good pop song, the lyrical structure is of such a poetic complexity that it invites the listener to become absorbed in the words, but it comes without the sugarcoating. This album may alienate some fans that associate punk simply with a certain sound as opposed to a mentality, but this is the beauty of *The Argument*. It satisfies the crusty punk and the fey popster by pairing intelligent political rants with harmonics and choruses, which at their core, are the very epitome of pop music. (John Southern)

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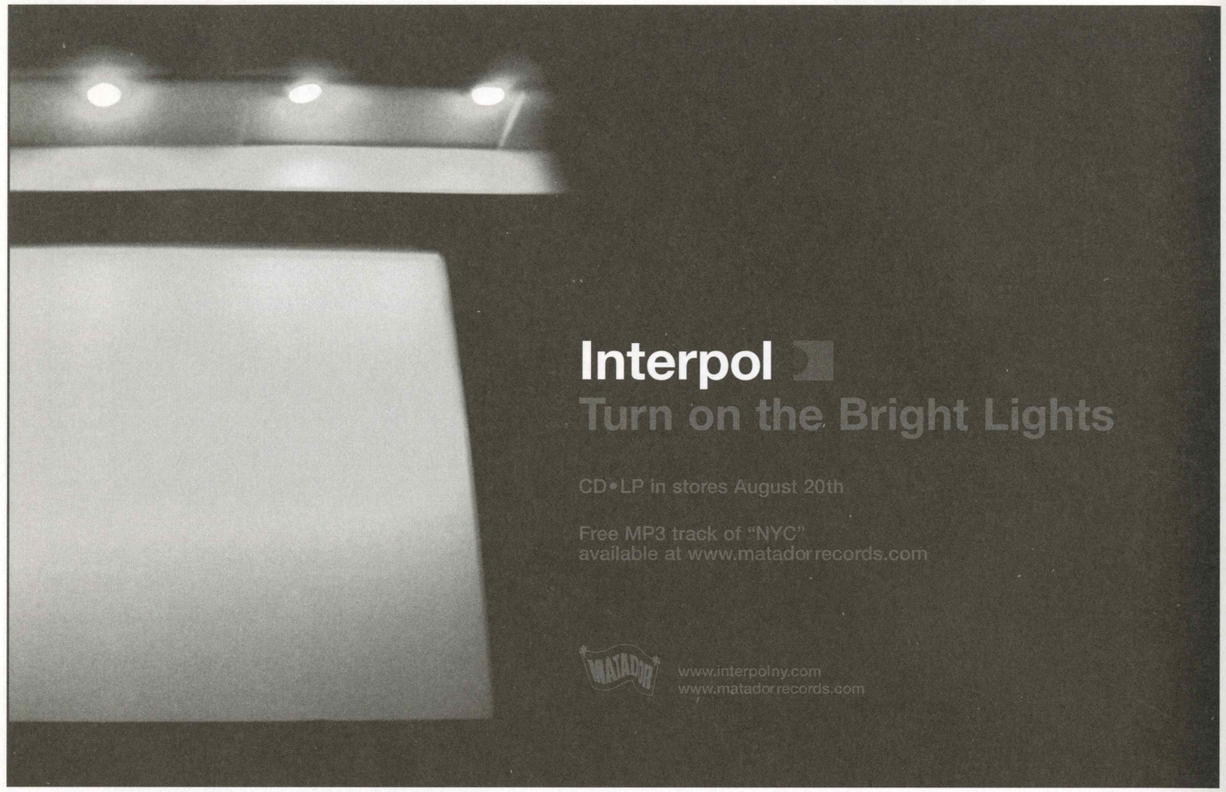
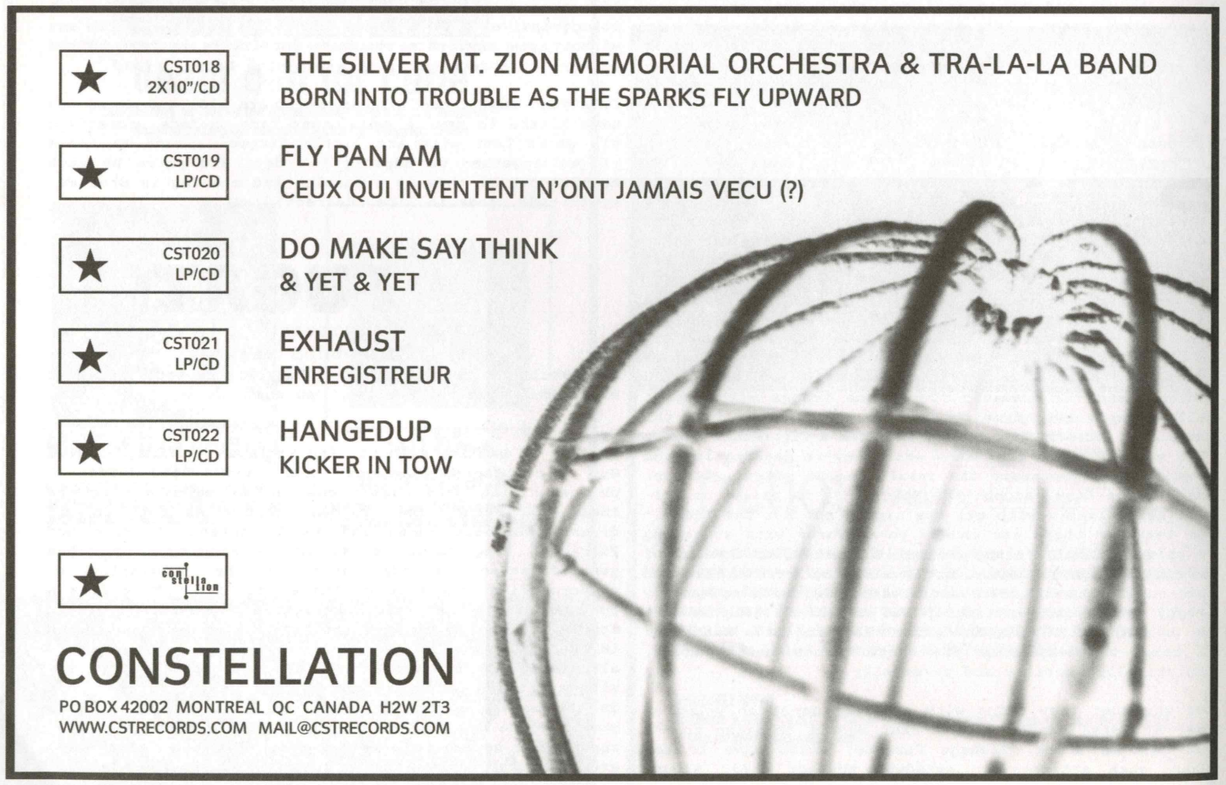
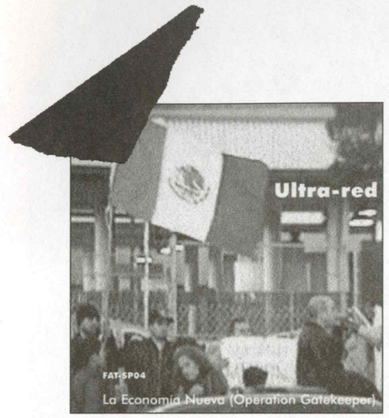




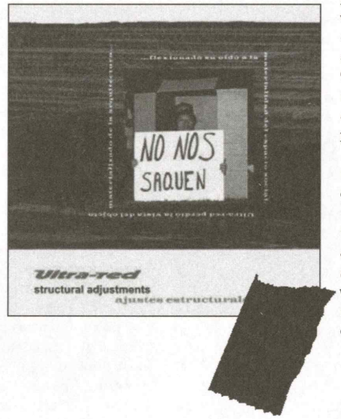


ULTRA RED

Structural Adjustments
Mille Plateaux
La Economia Nueva
Fat Cat Records

Since this is the Public Housing issue, it seems fitting to bring up *Structural Adjustments*, eleven tracks of socially relevant ambience by the LA-based Ultra-Red audio collective. *Structural Adjustments* is an album that belongs in the library of any student of urbanism, nestled between Henri Lefebvre's *Production of Space* and Rosalyn Deutsche's *Evictions*. Less dancy than, for example, their A16 album, created from site-recordings at the April 2000 protests against the World Bank and IMF, the music still has a beat that carries one along with it. The beat is not like a drum to move the dancers, but like a river, or a rainstorm, to dissolve the hegemony of photographic and visual representation's hold on architecture and urbanism.

Structural Adjustments was created in solidarity with the *Union de Vecinos* (Union of Neighbors) of the Pico Aliso and Aliso Village housing projects in Los Angeles. The citizens group formed in opposition to the LA Housing Authority's plan to displace 1200 hundred households in the service of neighborhood reconstruction. The Union demanded that there was to be no displacement a without guaranteed return to the neighborhood. (As any student of the history of "urban renewal" knows, housing authorities can not make such guarantees since they inevitably build fewer units than they displace.) Recordings were made in the neighborhood, at demolition sites, at protests, and at meetings with the City Council.



All in all, a triumphant and uplifting remix of the sound of democracy, bilingual, to boot! Their more recent Fat Cat release, *La Economia Nueva (Operation Gatekeeper)* is somewhat different in that there's less of a direct message and more of a dialectical development of sounds. Stylistically it's more of what could be called glitch music. Percussion slowly emerges from the entry and re-entry of a cry of "Ya Basta!" in the first track. Noises established coalesce into an ambiance that melts into a Bjork-like staticy soft percussion, interspersed with a rhythm which could be factory or a bulldozer, or the frenzy of many hands banging against an iron fence. It comes and goes. The closing track begins with a tone that layers and develops into percussion and bass-beats, and the return of protest sounds.

In the end, we are left knowing nothing definite about *La Economia Nueva*, except that in the New Economy packaging is important. The fifteen-minute recording comes on a very pretty three-inch CD, in a little square case with a lovely photo of a man with a bullhorn shouting by a chain-link fence while the Mexican flag flutters overhead. (Lex Bhagat)

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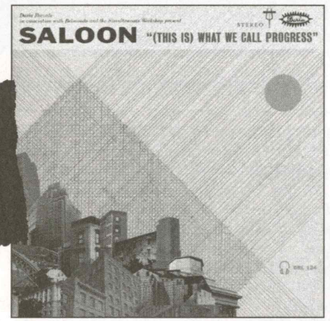
SALOON

(This is) What We Call Progress

Darla Records

British five-piece Saloon craft beautifully articulated pop music that is both seductive and spacey. In fact, *(This is) What We Call Progress* has everything to do about duality - blending bright, shimmering melodies with rainy-day melancholy. Jangly guitars meander through somber strings and quirky analog electronica, creating a sublimely brittle balance between straightforward songwriting and celestial funk. Amanda Gomez's sweetly hushed vocals float delicately above the instrumentation, held together only by the strand of each breath. The album's opener, "Plastic Surgery," pulses with signals transmitted from a distant satellite before surging to life, embracing a cyclical, forward-moving rhythm. Haunting violas descend and wash the moog drones in lofty starlight. And then, without warning, track two downshifts into murkier waters. On "Bicycle Thieves," Gomez sings, "These are splinters of half-formed thoughts, these are splinters of battles fought." Pouting horns and feathery percussion create feelings of empathy, unraveling much like a Wes Anderson movie, wet mascara and all. "Girls Are the New Boys" takes a stellar stab at pastel-colored pop, shamelessly opening the floodgates towards the end for an anthemic jam session. Throughout much of the ten-song record, the listener is navigated only by the faint glimmer of vocals. It is this ethereal and subdued quality of sound that leaves the listener with a burning desire to find closure. Like a novel that is only partially understood, one can't help but search for a cue that will make sense of it all, hidden somewhere among the sighs of dialogue. (SB)

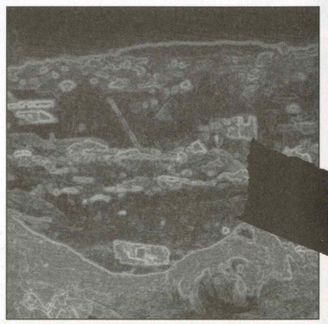


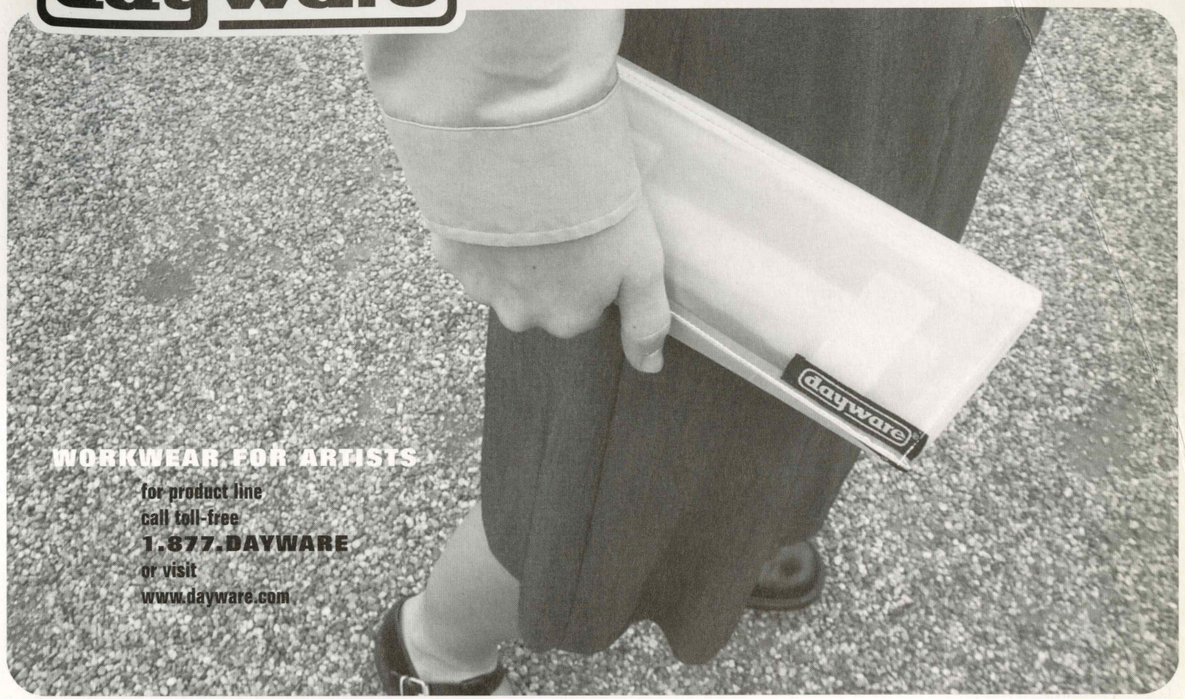
XIU XIU

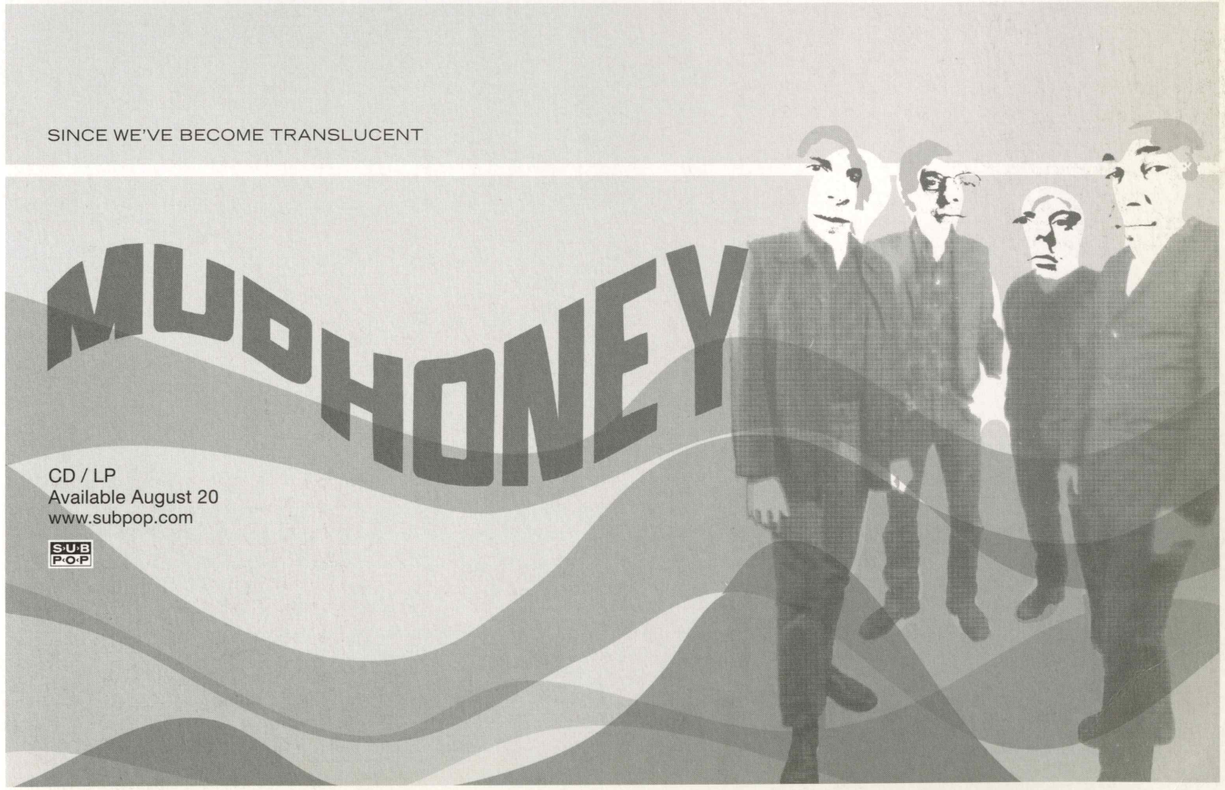
Knife Play

5rc label

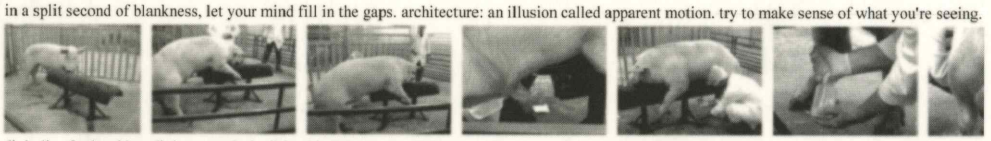
Xiu Xiu is the answer for all of those lost souls who went to bed with The Strokes or The Hives and regret what they woke up with. The Olympia, Washington ensemble produces haunting journeys that drift between discordant longing and quiet introspection. Singer Jamie Stewart's plaintive moaning serves as the frosting on a very bitter, but nevertheless delicious cake. Xiu Xiu's songs on their debut project, Knife Play dissect the darker side of the human psyche, recounting car crashes, spoiled birthdays, and failed relationships. Each of the albums tracks are a complex juxtaposition of Stewart's vocals and the diverse instrumentation put forth by the rest of the band, which includes a harmonium, guitars, synths, tape-loops and even a gong. The thrashing, disjunctive percussion and silky rhythms intertwine, shaking you by the shoulders as they caress your cheek. *Knife Play* is an album that would make the Goth you dated in high school faint with pleasure and make the Rock Star you're seeing now, cringe with jealousy. (JS)







in a split second of blankness, let your mind fill in the gaps. architecture: an illusion called apparent motion. try to make sense of what you're seeing.



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